To June.
Merideth, 1934.

Golden Treasury Series

POEMS OF CHRISTINA ROSSETTI

Christina Rossetti

from a drawing made by Dante Gabriel Rossetti in 1865.

Emery Walker Ph. Sc.

POEMS

OF

CHRISTINA ROSSETTI

CHOSEN AND EDITED BY

WILLIAM M. ROSSETTI

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PREFACE

THE Poetical Works of Christina Georgina Rossetti (born on 5th December 1830, and deceased on 29th December 1894), were first published in a fully collected form at the beginning of 1904, with a considerable amount of matter in the way of Preface, Memoir, Notes, etc. With that form I, as her brother and representative, am very well satisfied. But I think that, in the interest of her not innumerous readers, and of her own poetical repute, it would be desirable also to give currency to a volume consisting only of her *best* work; so that persons disposed to sympathize with her writings may have in their hands a booklet rather than a book, and may find in the booklet whatever they would most like to estimate her by, and would oftenest recur to. An opportunity for this treatment of her poems offers by including a selection of them in the *Golden Treasury* series—an opportunity of which I gladly avail myself, for nothing could suit my views better.

The question, Which are the best poems of Christina Rossetti? is one that would necessarily be answered diversely by diverse minds. I have answered it according to my own feeling, judgment, and taste, comprising here all the compositions which I consider to be of her highest rank, and not any others. It should be understood, however, that a large number of devotional poems, which were in the first instance published by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, and which were

reproduced in the *Poetical Works*, are not in the present volume drawn upon at all. They include a good deal of Christina's finest work of that class, and I should have found no difficulty in selecting from among them nearly a hundred short pieces well qualified for figuring here. Leaving these wholly out of count, and attending only to the compositions which are actually embraced in our compilation, I may say that there are still some others which could have been admitted without in any way derogating from the standard of this selection; but still those which I apprehend to be the best are here presented. As to the great majority of these examples, I believe that my opinion would be ratified by most of the admirers and students of Christina Rossetti's work. Some such persons would undoubtedly hold that certain things are included, and certain others excluded, wrongfully. This I should regret in its degree; but I have to recur to my own estimate as my criterion, and by that I abide.

I have arranged the several poems in an order of my own, not strictly corresponding to any order followed in previous forms of publication. In our present pages they appear without being visibly divided into sections of any kind, but none the less they are distributed in a sequence which is not mere hap-hazard. I place at the opening of the volume Christina's most popular narrative poem, *Goblin Market*, followed by one of her two principal series of sonnets, *Monna Innominata*. Similarly, at the end of the volume comes her one semi-dramatic composition, the Pageant of *The Months*, preceded by the other sonnet-series, *Later Life*. The second of her leading narratives, *The Prince's Progress*, is placed towards the middle of the volume. After *Monna Innominata* are a large number of *Devotional Poems*, and after *The Prince's Progress* such other poems as are of a narrative or quasi-narrative character.

The remaining compositions, miscellaneous enough in themselves, are arranged according to a certain order

which I defined in an Appendix to the Table of Contents in the *Poetical Works*. I there referred to 'some leading themes, or key-notes of feeling,' in my sister's poems, viz. 'Personal Experiences and Emotions, Death, the Aspiration after Rest, Vanity of Vanities, Love of Animals, Winter, and the Loveliness of the Rose.' Some pieces which indicate 'the aspiration after rest' are now placed directly after the *Devotional Poems*, and 'Vanity of Vanities' finds a place among the *Devotional Poems* themselves. Next following the narrative poems which succeed *The Prince's Progress* I give the poems of personal experiences and emotions, of death, and of love of animals, respectively. Those which relate to winter and the loveliness of the rose have been merged in compositions concerning the various seasons of the year. After all these 'leading themes or key-notes of feeling' have been exhausted, there still remain several poems, unclassified as to drift or structure, which come near the end of the volume, followed only by *Later Life* and *The Months*.

The fact that this volume is an anthology, compiled with a view to its being read *passim* for pleasure rather than in a spirit of critical investigation, is my reason for not having introduced into its pages any sign of sectional divisions, or of transition from one sort of theme to another. But I will give here a table of the sequence adopted, with the dates (which are always attentively observed) of the several sequences. They run as follows —the dates being sometimes only approximate:

Nos.	
1.	Goblin Market—1859.
2.	Monna Innominata—1881.
3 to 70	Devotional Poems—1849 to 1893
71 to 73.	The Aspiration after Rest—1849 to 1893.
74.	The Prince's Progress—1865.
75 to 98.	Narrative or quasi-narrative—1855 to 1881.
99 to 118.	Personal Experiences and Emotions—1848 to 1884.

119 to 127. Death—1848 to 1864.
128 to 132. Love of Animals—1850 to 1878.
133 to 149. The Seasons—1853 to 1883.
150 to 185. Unclassified Subjects—1849 to 1882.
186. Later Life—1881.
187. The Months: a Pageant—1879.

I will add—in a spirit not of critical estimation, but of simple elucidation—a few words as to these several sections.

No. 1.—*Goblin Market* is a 'fairy-tale' of Christina's own invention, not intended to convey any profound or strictly definable moral lesson. It is mainly a story of sisterly affection; showing how the prudent sister Lizzie saved the imprudent one, Laura, who, after getting a first taste of the luscious but noxious goblin-fruits, was doomed never to secure another taste, and so to pine away and die. From this fate Lizzie redeems Laura by inducing the goblins to besmear her own face with the fruit-juices, and then proffering these for Laura to kiss off.

No. 2.—*Monna Innominata* is put forward by the authoress as a fancy-series of sonnets which one might suppose to be written by a loving lady of the Middle Ages, whose love, though perfectly pure, is not to find its issue in matrimony. This is a veil, behind which one has to seek a face, and the face is that of Christina Rossetti. So far, the series resembles that by Mrs. Browning (referred to in Christina's prose-note) which she chose to call *Sonnets from the Portuguese*, although there were no Portuguese originals for them.

Nos. 3 to 70.—The *Devotional Poems* form a large selection, which would (as already indicated) be still larger if the compositions first published by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge had furnished their quota. The deepest interest of the authoress's life was devotional; her Christian faith being of the most absolute and also of the most literal kind, and, in these

rationalizing days when old dogmas have to pass through the crucible and come out transformed, one cannot readily foresee when further religious poems, on quite the same lines as those of Christina Rossetti, are likely to be forthcoming. Much of her best verse is to be found in these devotional poems, with their absorbing love for the person and the work of Jesus Christ as God and man, and their humble and trembling trust in the covenant of the New Law. They are not doctrinal or didactic: doctrine is pre-supposed in them, and didacticism repelled. They are passionate communings of the believing and loving soul with the God believed in and loved, and also feared.

Nos. 71 to 73.—As subsidiary to the *Devotional Poems* come these few pieces in which an aspiration for rest after the turmoil of this mundane life is more marked than the yearning for heavenly bliss. As to these cognate topics, it may be remarked in general that Christina's poems contemplate (in accordance with a dominant form of Christian belief) an 'intermediate state' of perfect rest and inchoate beatific vision before the day of judgment and the resurrection of the body and sanctification in heaven.

No. 74.—*The Prince's Progress* is the only rather long narrative, besides *Goblin Market*, which my sister produced. She preferred *Goblin Market*, and the great majority of readers have, I think, concurred with her.

Nos. 75 to 98.—The *Narrative or quasi-narrative poems* are mostly only of the quasi-narrative kind. For direct full-tinted narrative Christina had not much vocation; something of the fanciful or symbolic constantly flecked it when she made the experiment. Many of the pieces in this section are more in the nature of dialogue or speech than of narration. Readers of her work regard her much more as a poet of sentiment, and especially of devotional sentiment, than of anything of the narrative class. Still there is amid her compositions a certain appreciable proportion of narrative or

quasi-narrative, and these examples I have thought it well to keep together.

Nos. 99 to 118.—Personal experiences and emotions count for much in her work. Her feelings were acute, deep, and constant, in a marked degree; and one finds in her verse a noticeable combination of the outspoken with the self-repressing. She had nothing to hide away, but much to keep down under the control of a strong and resolute will. I do not enter here into explanatory details: they could be found in the Memoir prefixed to her *Poetical Works*.

Nos. 119 to 127.—Death, as the avenue to a higher life, was contemplated by Christina Rossetti without nervousness or repulsion, even for the most part with desire; and this in her youthful as well as her later poems. Whether that was 'morbid' or not, readers may form their own opinion without any assistance from me.

Nos. 128 to 132.—Love of Animals is but a minor matter. It was however a very persistent lifelong predilection with Christina, and is not unworthy of figuring among her 'key-notes of feeling.' She was not at all addicted to accumulating 'pets,' or cockering them up with spinsterish effusion: no neighbour had to get her summoned for keeping seven cats and nine dogs. Broadly speaking, she liked any and every animal—they were all the objects of her fellow-feeling: a frog paired with a dog, and an owl with a fowl. She had even a certain preference for an odd or awkward animal over a showy or elegant one.

Nos. 133 to 149.—The Seasons and Months of the Year form the subject of several of her poems. June was perhaps her favourite month, winter her season of antipathy. With seasons and months come floral and other beauties—especially the rose (foremost), and the lily and violet.

Nos. 150 to 185.—The Unclassified Subjects need not detain us here. They are frequently related more

or less, but indefinitely, to some of the other sub-divisions.

No. 186.—*Later Life* is a series of sonnets which Christina herself put together in this form. Some of them, I presume, were written with an express view to such an arrangement—others apparently not.

No. 187.—*The Months: a Pageant*, which takes the form of a semi-dramatic divertissement, was composed with the notion that it might possibly be performed as such, and it *has* been performed more than once. In June 1904 it made a very delectable spectacle, with numerous performers and abundant music and dancing, at the Albert Hall, London.

It will easily be understood why I do not attempt here to enter into anything like a critical estimate of the poetic and literary value of Christina Rossetti's writings: the obstacle is that she was my sister. At the same time it may be admissible for me to define a few leading characteristics which, as I knew them to be personal to the poetess herself, so also I perceive to be prominent in the poems.

The first of these I call spontaneity—*i.e.* the faculty of seeing a thing for herself, without prompting or coöperation of any kind; and of putting it into the apposite shape as soon as it was seen. This shape evinces a remarkably full variety in metrical or rhythmical form—lines of unequal length and the like; and, if the verses preserve lyrical sweetness and melodious proportion, that could only have been due to the delicate unity of the original impulse. Next comes sincerity—the sort of sincerity to which one more especially applies the term 'candour'; a desire to exhibit the thing seen just as it presented itself, and with the same investiture of emotion which it commanded, neither more nor less: the perceptions were genuinely intuitive. Or the same point might be expressed by saying that, when she perceived a thing naturally and strongly, the perception soon merged into enjoyment, and that again into love. Then there is a constant

habit of viewing matters from a lofty and detached point of view, and also from a familiar one; amounting to a rare and subtle interfusion of a predominant and abstruse melancholy with an archness which, though strictly subordinate, was not less innate and habitual. Last and chief of all is the continuous reference of whatsoever is seen to something which is unseen, but which, by an act of faith, is acknowledged to be the vast reality whereof all else are but pigmy semblances or perishable obstructions. This attitude of the spirit is naturally most conspicuous in the devotional poems; but few are the pieces in which it is not more or less strenuously pronounced.

The reader of Christina Rossetti's poems will be apt to say that there is an unceasing use of biblical diction. This is a fact; and to some minds it may appear to detract seriously from her claims to originality, or to personal merit of execution. Without pre-judging this question, I will only remark that the Bible was so much her rule of life and of faith that it had almost become a part of herself, and she uttered herself accordingly. In 1852 there was a book published by Prof. Henry Rogers, entitled *The Eclipse of Faith*, much applauded in those years. The author championed the Christian creed against all gainsayers; and one episode of his book, aiming to show how deeply the Scriptures are interwoven into the whole texture of modern life, was a dream in which books of every class of literature were seen with blanks left for all those passages which were directly or indirectly dependent upon what can be found in the Bible. The blanks were numerous and startling indeed; and it may truly be said that the pages of Christina Rossetti would by such a process have been reduced to something approaching a vacuum.

Some critics have opined that the poems of our authoress are in a marked degree unequal; several not far from perfection, and others quite indifferent. If I thought this, I should have no difficulty in admitting it:

but it is an opinion in which I do not concur. That some things are much better than some others is of course obvious, and also inevitable. No poet whatsoever, writing a large number of compositions varying in theme, form, and method of treatment, writes them all on one uniform scale of achievement. Indeed, I should say that, the better the poet, the less likely is any such result; for an excellent poet must always *feel* different subjects with different degrees of intensity or of passion, and his success in the handling of the subjects will correspond. It could only be a very 'minor' poet who, being lukewarm or dim-sighted as to all the topics upon which he excercises his pen, would be fairly equable in dealing with all. To this extent, therefore—that Christina Rossetti is unequal in her poems—I fully agree with the allegation; but not that she is more unequal than the general run of good poets. I might even go so far as to hold that there are few of her published verses to which the term 'poor' or 'mediocre' rightly applies (apart, that is, from mere juvenilia, preserved rather as curiosities than as anything else). At all events, let me hope that the present volume does not include any poems unworthy to pair with their colleagues.

It was my unusual lot to be the brother of two poets recognized as distinguished — Dante Gabriel and Christina Georgina Rossetti: our father also was a poet of no little eminence in Italy. Both my brother and my sister began writing verse at a childish age, say six and eleven. As they progressed in years, their product was very diverse; and an opinion has sometimes been expressed that it is not easy to say which of the two was the better poet. My own view is that Christina had fully as true a poetic vocation as Dante Gabriel, and wrote poetry which, though far more restricted in scope, and more of a monotone in method, was, according to its own showing, by no means inferior to his. Restricted though its scope, the pitch of her verse is high, owing to

the intensely devotional quality of her spirit: her main concern is eternity, or time as related to eternity. In point of execution the brother is much the more elaborate artist: yet it does not follow that he is the more genuine, or the more secure in attainment. They were both original, in the sense that neither of them took any particular predecessor as a model of style or a preceptor in development. For limpid freshness of feeling Christina stands the higher: for depth of feeling she cannot be called the lower, though she is less obviously passion-wrung in the stress and coil of circumstance. I make these few remarks by way of parallel in a case of which I necessarily have intimate knowledge, but not with any aim at criticism of the laudatory order.

While I should consider criticism in its fuller sense, even if not laudatory, as forbidden to myself, I think a reader of this volume should not be left without some modicum of it, whether to guide his views or to put into articulate terms what he tends to discern for himself. Many miscellaneous readers have perceptions as acute as those of critics who print their dicta; but these perceptions remain comparatively hazy, as not finding a clear vehicle of expression and exposition. I therefore add to this Preface some extracts from press-criticisms, confining myself to such only as have appeared since the publication of the *Poetical Works*. The extracts which I give appear to me to be imbued with a full share of critical intelligence. Whether I agree with them precisely, or which of them I agree with, does not need to be brought into discussion.

WM. M. ROSSETTI.

LONDON, *September* 1904.

EXTRACTS FROM REVIEWS

FORD M. HUEFFER (*Fortnightly Review*).—'In abstract matters she was not singularly intellectual: indeed we may say that she was not intellectual at all. She had strong and settled faiths that simply could not be talked about. Many of her poems may have been suggested by events, but they were inspired psychologically. They were renderings of emotions she had felt. Even her devotional poetry is seldom other than the expression of a mood. She had the gift of just, simple, and touching words, and with them she drew pictures that expressed her moods. She remains the poet of lines, of stanzas, of phrases, and of cadences, that are intimately right. Her faculty for pure delight and for æsthetic enjoyment was expressed in her metre. It is rhythmical and even intricate: it is a faculty that, coming from very deep in the sources of enjoyment, moves us for deep and unexplained reasons just as the rhythms of music do. Her skill in true rhymes was only equalled by her delicacy in using false ones—those delicious things. Christina Rossetti, with her introspection, studied her soul: with her talent she rendered it until she became the poet of the suffering—and suffering is a thing of all the ages.'

Rev. T. A. SEED (*Great Thoughts*).—'Her genius for religious poetry is universally recognized: her place among the highest English poets is secure: her pious, childlike spirit is alive in all her readers' hearts. For imaginative spiritual vision, and for sheer uplifting power, I know not where, in all the realms of poetry, to look for more than half a dozen poems to be even distantly compared with hers. Some of them almost lift you off your feet.'

A. M. (*The Guardian*).—'Built in the Living Rock and smitten to the innermost depths, her life was 'hid with Christ in God.' Christina Rossetti's deep and fastidious veracity added the final note of distinction to her most enduring verse; verse of which the word 'distinction' may be used in a special and primary sense, for she is so 'distinct in individualities' that to class her with others, even the greatest, would be to lose sight of one of her most striking attributes; and especially perhaps of her religious poems is this true. For her work the word 'workmanship' seems misleading: when that work is most perfect it bears rather the impress of a transcendent and irresistible *creation* than of any clumsier process.'

The Athenæum.—'She resembles her brother in the rich artistry of her work. You see it in the early *Goblin Market.* The story, to our mind, is weak—even weaker than that of *The Ancient Mariner;* but the glow of descriptive colour, the research of diction, are abundantly evident. So with other poems, even in later years: they are mosaics, they are tessellated with many-hued and burnished phrase. This strong instinct, this conspicuous quality, blends in strange contrast with her pensive asceticism: yet they do blend, and in their contrast is a subtle harmony. She had at call the power of elemental expression no less than of rich mosaic. In her purely religious verse it naturally predominates. She is among the few who have written religious poetry with the sap of immortality.'

The Times.—'Her main and constant theme is the desire for a security of righteousness never attained. Her piety, her devotion to duty, her even and sequestered way of life, could not protect her from the fever and unrest with which the desire for some kind of impossible perfection has afflicted so many poets. She enjoys the beauties of the earth and sky always with a sense of their precariousness, and with the faint delight of one who feels the wind and sun for the first time after a long sickness. The metrical scheme is irregular, so that it may never become insistent, and all obvious cadences are avoided. She could only express her own moods, dark or shining, as they came to her. But the expression of them ought to touch us like the outcries of the hero of a moving play, drawn from him

by an adverse fate. Indeed, in her poetry there is the long and quiet tragedy of a mind too aspiring and a body too frail for the conditions of our life, yet struggling bravely, if often blindly, against them; and the tragedy is lightened with many intervals of innocent delight, and snatches of clear music.'

The Baptist Magazine.—'Our high appreciation of this devout and ecstatic singer has been frequently expressed. She was in many ways a contrast to Mrs. Browning. More remote and unworldly, dwelling far from the tumult and the strife, as in dim religious light in the atmosphere of the aisle and cloister, incapable of discussing problems of social and economic reform or writing a novel in verse, Miss Rossetti had the vision of a seer, the self-distrust of a penitent, and the rapture of a saint. The subtle witchery of words, the quaint fantastic beauty, the exquisite finish, the fervent and intense passion, the sincere religious feeling, in all her best poems, give them a peculiar hold on sympathetic minds. Mr. Swinburne describes the verses *Passing Away* (the third of the *Old and New Year Ditties*) as "so much the noblest of sacred poems in our language that there is none which comes near it enough to stand second: a hymn touched as with the fire and bathed as in the light of sunbeams, tuned as to chords and cadences of refluent sea-music beyond reach of harp and organ, large echoes of the serene and sonorous tides of heaven."'

ARTHUR WAUGH (*Daily Chronicle*).—'She was a woman first of all, and she was content to remain a woman to the end. Her poetry does not strive or cry: it makes no effort to do anything foreign to its own gentle, tender nature: it accepts the burden of womanhood. Here at once she separates from her great contemporary among women-poets, Elizabeth Barrett Browning.'

The Daily News.—'There is no religious poetry like the delicate lyricism of this aërial music—at once so deeply felt and so perfectly rendered, so fragile and yet so flawless.'

The East Anglian Daily Times.—'At her best, her work has a rare sweetness and sincerity, an exquisite humility, a sense of divine aloofness from the common and vulgar things of life. I find in her too an odd occasional

suggestion of that sensuousness which has so fine a feature in the art of her great brother Gabriel; though here the sensuousness is so sublimated and refined that it has changed into the devout rapture of the nun.

SYDNEY WISNOM (*To-day*).—'None but Blake ever sang in the same sweet infantile way. Miss Rossetti, however, looked on the fleeting things of earth—on the green things and the gold and on white lilies—with a sanity of eye that was denied to Blake. She was, moreover, a more universal singer than he.'

The Bookman.—'As a rule, Miss Rossetti's poetry is pitched in a minor key. It is, taken as a whole, the poetry of human plaintiveness and isolation. The bulk of her poems are like so many slow, patient, and half child-like tears—tears allowed to fall not from revolt, but involuntarily through excessive pain. At the same time, in her most melancholy poems, there is never exuberance of emotion. She was essentially a singer, because her soul could not keep absolute silence. All the tragic by-ways of emotion seemed laid bare to her. But, though she lived too near the tragic side of existence ever to forget it for long, she had outbursts of a charming, if tremulous, gaiety, and some of her lighter work is full of radiance and colour.'

The Speaker.—'There is something in Christina Rossetti's poems, apart from their excellence, which inclines the reader to like her. They seem to be the work of an honest and delicate mind. She never tries to persuade you that she is inspired when she is not. She labours to write well, but is not too anxious to please. Her sorrows, if often mere mental pain, were real enough to her, and she fought bravely with them. Poetry is a language that communicates emotions as well as meanings; and Christina Rossetti had mastered her language so well that she communicates her emotions more forcibly than almost any modern poets.'

F. G. BETTANY (*The Sunday Special*).—'Mrs. Browning is the inevitable foil of Christina Rossetti. The sister-poet lacks Mrs. Browning's warm expansive sympathy with suffering and toiling humanity. In return Christina Rossetti offers music of delicate purity and angelic loveliness. Her piety asks no questions, it is posed by no problems, it kneels in adoring awe.'

The Montrose Standard. — 'Not naturally disposed towards prolonged exertion, Christina was wonderfully prolific of the quick and often entrancing fancies which, to one possessing her gift, naturally take shape in song. Her aim is not so much to leave an impression upon thought, emotion, creed, or character, as to voice for others' pleasure a passing gleam of fancy which pleased herself. She has withall in exceptional degree, the power of vividly realizing the magic of nature, and that may be taken as her supreme gift.'

The Bulletin, Sydney. — 'With all her useless baggage of religious verbiage, Christina Rossetti is one of the memorable English woman-poets, and perhaps in sum the greatest. In lyrical passion she is not inferior to Mrs. Browning, and at times she rises to a rarer ecstasy that can be matched with Shelley's. Out of her anguish was born her poetry.'

ARTHUR C. BENSON (in the volume *Rossetti*; Series, *English Men of Letters*). — 'In one important direction did he and his sister Christina and Mr. Swinburne modify the literary art of the time. They effected a reformation in language. Poetry had fallen under the influence of Tennyson in an almost helpless fashion. Rossetti, Christina Rossetti, and Mr. Swinburne, struck boldly across the path, leaving a trail of fire. They were not so much rebellious, but they did again what Tennyson had done in his early prime. They dared to use simple and direct words, which they infused with new and audacious charm. There was nothing didactic about them; they went straight to the source of pure beauty; they recharged, so to speak, homely and direct expressions with the very element of poetical vigour. Even Christina Rossetti, deeply religious as she is, had little ethical about her. She enjoyed her faith, if I may use the expression, with all the rapture of a mediæval saint. She visualized her dreams without timidity, and spoke her thoughts, not because they were improving but because they were beautiful.'

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GOBLIN MARKET

Morning and evening
Maids heard the goblins cry :
'Come buy our orchard fruits,
Come buy, come buy :
Apples and quinces,
Lemons and oranges,
Plump unpecked cherries,
Melons and raspberries,
Bloom-down-cheeked peaches,
Swart-headed mulberries,
Wild free-born cranberries,
Crab-apples, dewberries,
Pine-apples, blackberries,
Apricots, strawberries ;—
All ripe together
In summer weather,—
Morns that pass by,
Fair eves that fly ;
Come buy, come buy :
Our grapes fresh from the vine,
Pomegranates full and fine,
Dates and sharp bullaces,
Rare pears and greengages,
Damsons and bilberries,
Taste them and try :
Currants and gooseberries,

Bright-fire-like barberries,
Figs to fill your mouth,
Citrons from the South,
Sweet to tongue and sound to eye;
Come buy, come buy.'

Evening by evening
Among the brookside rushes,
Laura bowed her head to hear,
Lizzie veiled her blushes:
Crouching close together
In the cooling weather,
With clasping arms and cautioning lips,
With tingling cheeks and finger tips.
'Lie close,' Laura said,
Pricking up her golden head:
'We must not look at goblin men,
We must not buy their fruits:
Who knows upon what soil they fed
Their hungry thirsty roots?'
'Come buy,' call the goblins
Hobbling down the glen.
'Oh,' cried Lizzie, 'Laura, Laura,
You should not peep at goblin men.'
Lizzie covered up her eyes,
Covered close lest they should look;
Laura reared her glossy head,
And whispered like the restless brook:
'Look, Lizzie, look, Lizzie,
Down the glen tramp little men.
One hauls a basket,
One bears a plate,
One lugs a golden dish
Of many pounds' weight.
How fair the vine must grow

Whose grapes are so luscious;
How warm the wind must blow
Through those fruit bushes.'
'No,' said Lizzie: 'No, no, no;
Their offers should not charm us,
Their evil gifts would harm us.'
She thrust a dimpled finger
In each ear, shut eyes and ran:
Curious Laura chose to linger
Wondering at each merchant man.
One had a cat's face,
One whisked a tail,
One tramped at a rat's pace,
One crawled like a snail,
One like a wombat prowled obtuse and furry,
One like a ratel tumbled hurry skurry.
She heard a voice like voice of doves
Cooing all together:
They sounded kind and full of loves
In the pleasant weather.

Laura stretched her gleaming neck
Like a rush-imbedded swan,
Like a lily from the beck,
Like a moonlit poplar branch,
Like a vessel at the launch
When its last restraint is gone.

Backwards up the mossy glen
Turned and trooped the goblin men,
With their shrill repeated cry,
'Come buy, come buy.'
When they reached where Laura was
They stood stock still upon the moss,
Leering at each other,

Brother with queer brother;
Signalling each other,
Brother with sly brother.
One set his basket down,
One reared his plate;
One began to weave a crown
Of tendrils, leaves, and rough nuts brown
(Men sell not such in any town);
One heaved the golden weight
Of dish and fruit to offer her:
'Come buy, come buy,' was still their cry.
Laura stared but did not stir,
Longed but had no money.
The whisk-tailed merchant bade her taste
In tones as smooth as honey,
The cat-faced purr'd,
The rat-paced spoke a word
Of welcome, and the snail-paced even was heard;
One parrot-voiced and jolly
Cried 'Pretty Goblin' still for 'Pretty Polly';
One whistled like a bird.

But sweet-tooth Laura spoke in haste:
'Good Folk, I have no coin;
To take were to purloin:
I have no copper in my purse,
I have no silver either,
And all my gold is on the furze
That shakes in windy weather
Above the rusty heather.'
'You have much gold upon your head,'
They answered all together:
'Buy from us with a golden curl.'
She clipped a precious golden lock,
She dropped a tear more rare than pearl,

Then sucked their fruit globes fair or red.
Sweeter than honey from the rock,
Stronger than man-rejoicing wine,
Clearer than water flowed that juice;
She never tasted such before,
How should it cloy with length of use?
She sucked and sucked and sucked the more
Fruits which that unknown orchard bore;
She sucked until her lips were sore;
Then flung the emptied rinds away
But gathered up one kernel stone,
And knew not was it night or day
As she turned home alone.

Lizzie met her at the gate
Full of wise upbraidings:
'Dear, you should not stay so late,
Twilight is not good for maidens;
Should not loiter in the glen
In the haunts of goblin men.
Do you not remember Jeanie,
How she met them in the moonlight,
Took their gifts both choice and many,
Ate their fruits and wore their flowers
Plucked from bowers
Where summer ripens at all hours?
But ever in the noonlight
She pined and pined away;
Sought them by night and day,
Found them no more, but dwindled and grew grey;
Then fell with the first snow,
While to this day no grass will grow
Where she lies low:
I planted daisies there a year ago
That never blow.

You should not loiter so.'
'Nay, hush,' said Laura :
'Nay, hush, my sister :
I ate and ate my fill,
Yet my mouth waters still :
To-morrow night I will
Buy more' ; and kissed her.
'Have done with sorrow ;
I'll bring you plums to-morrow
Fresh on their mother twigs,
Cherries worth getting ;
You cannot think what figs
My teeth have met in,
What melons icy-cold
Piled on a dish of gold
Too huge for me to hold,
What peaches with a velvet nap,
Pellucid grapes without one seed :
Odorous indeed must be the mead
Whereon they grow, and pure the wave they drink
With lilies at the brink,
And sugar-sweet their sap.'

Golden head by golden head,
Like two pigeons in one nest
Folded in each other's wings,
They lay down in their curtained bed :
Like two blossoms on one stem,
Like two flakes of new-fall'n snow,
Like two wands of ivory
Tipped with gold for awful kings.
Moon and stars gazed in at them,
Wind sang to them lullaby,
Lumbering owls forebore to fly,
Not a bat flapped to and fro

Round their nest:
Cheek to cheek and breast to breast
Locked together in one nest.

Early in the morning
When the first cock crowed his warning,
Neat like bees, as sweet and busy,
Laura rose with Lizzie:
Fetched in honey, milked the cows,
Aired and set to rights the house,
Kneaded cakes of whitest wheat,
Cakes for dainty mouths to eat,
Next churned butter, whipped up cream,
Fed their poultry, sat and sewed;
Talked as modest maidens should:
Lizzie with an open heart,
Laura in an absent dream,
One content, one sick in part;
One warbling for the mere bright day's delight,
One longing for the night.

At length slow evening came:
They went with pitchers to the reedy brook;
Lizzie most placid in her look,
Laura most like a leaping flame.
They drew the gurgling water from its deep.
Lizzie plucked purple and rich golden flags,
Then turning homeward said: 'The sunset flushes
Those furthest loftiest crags;
Come, Laura, not another maiden lags.
No wilful squirrel wags,
The beasts and birds are fast asleep.'
But Laura loitered still among the rushes,
And said the bank was steep.

And said the hour was early still,
The dew not fall'n, the wind not chill;
Listening ever, but not catching
The customary cry,
'Come buy, come buy,'
With its iterated jingle
Of sugar-baited words:
Not for all her watching
Once discerning even one goblin
Racing, whisking, tumbling, hobbling—
Let alone the herds
That used to tramp along the glen,
In groups or single,
Of brisk fruit-merchant men.

Till Lizzie urged, 'O Laura, come;
I hear the fruit-call, but I dare not look:
You should not loiter longer at this brook:
Come with me home.
The stars rise, the moon bends her arc,
Each glow-worm winks her spark,
Let us get home before the night grows dark:
For clouds may gather
Though this is summer weather,
Put out the lights and drench us through;
Then if we lost our way what should we do?'

Laura turned cold as stone
To find her sister heard that cry alone,
That goblin cry,
'Come buy our fruits, come buy.'
Must she then buy no more such dainty fruit?
Must she no more such succous pasture find,
Gone deaf and blind?
Her tree of life drooped from the root:

She said not one word in her heart's sore ache:
But peering thro' the dimness, nought discerning,
Trudged home, her pitcher dripping all the way;
So crept to bed, and lay
Silent till Lizzie slept;
Then sat up in a passionate yearning,
And gnashed her teeth for baulked desire, and wept
As if her heart would break.

Day after day, night after night,
Laura kept watch in vain
In sullen silence of exceeding pain.
She never caught again the goblin cry,
'Come buy, come buy';—
She never spied the goblin men
Hawking their fruits along the glen:
But when the noon waxed bright
Her hair grew thin and grey;
She dwindled, as the fair full moon doth turn
To swift decay and burn
Her fire away.

One day remembering her kernel-stone
She set it by a wall that faced the south;
Dewed it with tears, hoped for a root,
Watched for a waxing shoot,
But there came none.
It never saw the sun,
It never felt the trickling moisture run:
While with sunk eyes and faded mouth
She dreamed of melons, as a traveller sees
False waves in desert drouth
With shade of leaf-crowned trees,
And burns the thirstier in the sandful breeze.

She no more swept the house,
Tended the fowls or cows,
Fetched honey, kneaded cakes of wheat,
Brought water from the brook :
But sat down listless in the chimney-nook
And would not eat.

Tender Lizzie could not bear
To watch her sister's cankerous care,
Yet not to share.
She night and morning
Caught the goblins' cry :
'Come buy our orchard fruits,
Come buy, come buy :'—
Beside the brook, along the glen,
She heard the tramp of goblin men,
The voice and stir
Poor Laura could not hear ;
Longed to buy fruit to comfort her,
But feared to pay too dear.
She thought of Jeanie in her grave,
Who should have been a bride ;
But who for joys brides hope to have
Fell sick and died
In her gay prime,
In earliest winter time,
With the first glazing rime,
With the first snow-fall of crisp winter time.

Till Laura dwindling
Seemed knocking at Death's door.
Then Lizzie weighed no more
Better and worse ;
But put a silver penny in her purse,
Kissed Laura, crossed the heath with clumps of furze

At twilight, halted by the brook :
And for the first time in her life
Began to listen and look.

Laughed every goblin
When they spied her peeping :
Came towards her hobbling,
Flying, running, leaping,
Puffing and blowing,
Chuckling, clapping, crowing,
Clucking and gobbling,
Mopping and mowing,
Full of airs and graces,
Pulling wry faces,
Demure grimaces,
Cat-like and rat-like,
Ratel- and wombat-like,
Snail-paced in a hurry,
Parrot-voiced and whistler,
Helter skelter, hurry skurry,
Chattering like magpies,
Fluttering like pigeons,
Gliding like fishes,—
Hugged her and kissed her :
Squeezed and caressed her :
Stretched up their dishes,
Panniers, and plates :
'Look at our apples
Russet and dun,
Bob at our cherries,
Bite at our peaches,
Citrons and dates,
Grapes for the asking,
Pears red with basking
Out in the sun,

Plums on their twigs;
Pluck them and suck them,—
Pomegranates, figs.'

'Good folk,' said Lizzie,
Mindful of Jeanie:
'Give me much and many:'
Held out her apron,
Tossed them her penny.
'Nay, take a seat with us,
Honour and eat with us,'
They answered grinning:
'Our feast is but beginning.
Night yet is early,
Warm and dew-pearly,
Wakeful and starry:
Such fruits as these
No man can carry;
Half their bloom would fly,
Half their dew would dry,
Half their flavour would pass by.
Sit down and feast with us,
Be welcome guest with us,
Cheer you and rest with us.'—
'Thank you,' said Lizzie: 'But one waits
At home alone for me:
So without further parleying,
If you will not sell me any
Of your fruits though much and many,
Give me back my silver penny
I tossed you for a fee.'—
They began to scratch their pates,
No longer wagging, purring,
But visibly demurring,
Grunting and snarling.

One called her proud,
Cross-grained, uncivil;
Their tones waxed loud,
Their looks were evil.
Lashing their tails
They trod and hustled her,
Elbowed and jostled her,
Clawed with their nails,
Barking, mewing, hissing, mocking,
Tore her gown and soiled her stocking,
Twitched her hair out by the roots,
Stamped upon her tender feet,
Held her hands and squeezed their fruits
Against her mouth to make her eat.

White and golden Lizzie stood,
Like a lily in a flood,—
Like a rock of blue-veined stone
Lashed by tides obstreperously,—
Like a beacon left alone
In a hoary roaring sea,
Sending up a golden fire,—
Like a fruit-crowned orange-tree
White with blossoms honey-sweet
Sore beset by wasp and bee,—
Like a royal virgin town
Topped with gilded dome and spire
Close beleaguered by a fleet
Mad to tug her standard down.

One may lead a horse to water,
Twenty cannot make him drink.
Though the goblins cuffed and caught her
Coaxed and fought her,
Bullied and besought her

Scratched her, pinched her black as ink,
Kicked and knocked her,
Mauled and mocked her,
Lizzie uttered not a word;
Would not open lip from lip
Lest they should cram a mouthful in:
But laughed in heart to feel the drip
Of juice that syruped all her face,
And lodged in dimples of her chin,
And streaked her neck which quaked like curd.
At last the evil people,
Worn out by her resistance,
Flung back her penny, kicked their fruit
Along whichever road they took,
Not leaving root or stone or shoot;
Some writhed into the ground,
Some dived into the brook
With ring and ripple,
Some scudded on the gale without a sound,
Some vanished in the distance.

In a smart, ache, tingle,
Lizzie went her way;
Knew not was it night or day;
Sprang up the bank, tore thro' the furze,
Threaded copse and dingle,
And heard her penny jingle
Bouncing in her purse,—
Its bounce was music to her ear.
She ran and ran
As if she feared some goblin man
Dogged her with gibe or curse
Or something worse:
But not one goblin skurried after,
Nor was she pricked by fear;

The kind heart made her windy-paced
That urged her home quite out of breath with haste
And inward laughter.

She cried, 'Laura,' up the garden,
'Did you miss me?
Come and kiss me.
Never mind my bruises,
Hug me, kiss me, suck my juices
Squeezed from goblin fruits for you,
Goblin pulp and goblin dew.
Eat me, drink me, love me;
Laura, make much of me;
For your sake I have braved the glen
And had to do with goblin merchant men.'

Laura started from her chair,
Flung her arms up in the air,
Clutched her hair:
'Lizzie, Lizzie, have you tasted
For my sake the fruit forbidden?
Must your light like mine be hidden,
Your young life like mine be wasted,
Undone in mine undoing,
And ruined in my ruin,
Thirsty, cankered, goblin-ridden?'—
She clung about her sister,
Kissed and kissed and kissed her:
Tears once again
Refreshed her shrunken eyes,
Dropping like rain
After long sultry drouth;
Shaking with aguish fear, and pain,
She kissed and kissed her with a hungry mouth.

Her lips began to scorch,
That juice was wormwood to her tongue,
She loathed the feast:
Writhing as one possessed she leaped and sung,
Rent all her robe, and wrung
Her hands in lamentable haste,
And beat her breast.
Her locks streamed like the torch
Borne by a racer at full speed,
Or like the mane of horses in their flight,
Or like an eagle when she stems the light
Straight toward the sun,
Or like a caged thing freed,
Or like a flying flag when armies run.

Swift fire spread through her veins, knocked at her heart
Met the fire smouldering there
And overbore its lesser flame;
She gorged on bitterness without a name:
Ah fool, to choose such part
Of soul-consuming care!
Sense failed in the mortal strife:
Like the watch-tower of a town
Which an earthquake shatters down,
Like a lightning-stricken mast,
Like a wind-uprooted tree
Spun about,
Like a foam-topped waterspout
Cast down headlong in the sea,
She fell at last;
Pleasure past and anguish past,
Is it death or is it life?

Life out of death.
That night long Lizzie watched by her,
Counted her pulse's flagging stir,
Felt for her breath,
Held water to her lips, and cooled her face
With tears and fanning leaves.
But when the first birds chirped about their eaves,
And early reapers plodded to the place
Of golden sheaves,
And dew-wet grass
Bowed in the morning winds so brisk to pass,
And new buds with new day
Opened of cup-like lilies on the stream,
Laura awoke as from a dream,
Laughed in the innocent old way,
Hugged Lizzie but not twice or thrice;
Her gleaming locks showed not one thread of grey,
Her breath was sweet as May,
And light danced in her eyes.

Days, weeks, months, years
Afterwards, when both were wives
With children of their own;
Their mother-hearts beset with fears,
Their lives bound up in tender lives;
Laura would call the little ones
And tell them of her early prime,
Those pleasant days long gone
Of not-returning time:
Would talk about the haunted glen,
The wicked quaint fruit-merchant men,
Their fruits like honey to the throat
But poison in the blood
(Men sell not such in any town):
Would tell them how her sister stood

In deadly peril to do her good,
And win the fiery antidote:
Then joining hands to little hands
Would bid them cling together,—
'For there is no friend like a sister
In calm or stormy weather;
To cheer one on the tedious way,
To fetch one if one goes astray,
To lift one if one totters down,
To strengthen whilst one stands.'

MONNA INNOMINATA

A SONNET OF SONNETS

Beatrice, immortalized by 'altissimo poeta . . . cotanto amante'; Laura, celebrated by a great though an inferior bard,—have alike paid the exceptional penalty of exceptional honour, and have come down to us resplendent with charms, but (at least, to my apprehension) scant of attractiveness.

These heroines of world-wide fame were preceded by a bevy of unnamed ladies, 'donne innominate,' sung by a school of less conspicuous poets; and in that land and that period which gave simultaneous birth to Catholics, to Albigenses, and to Troubadours, one can imagine many a lady as sharing her lover's poetic aptitude, while the barrier between them might be one held sacred by both, yet not such as to render mutual love incompatible with mutual honour.

Had such a lady spoken for herself, the portrait left us might have appeared more tender, if less dignified, than any drawn even by a devoted friend. Or had the Great Poetess of our own day and nation only been unhappy instead of happy, her circumstances would have invited her to bequeath to us, in lieu of the 'Portuguese Sonnets,' an inimitable 'donna innominata' drawn not from fancy but from feeling, and worthy to occupy a niche beside Beatrice and Laura.

1

'Lo dì che han detto a' dolci amici addio. —DANTE.
'Amor, con quanto sforzo oggi mi vinci!'—PETRARCA.

COME back to me, who wait and watch for you :—
Or come not yet, for it is over then,
And long it is before you come again,
So far between my pleasures are and few.
While, when you come not, what I do I do
Thinking 'Now when he comes,' my sweetest 'when':
For one man is my world of all the men
This wide world holds; O love, my world is you.
Howbeit, to meet you grows almost a pang
Because the pang of parting comes so soon;
My hope hangs waning, waxing, like a moon
Between the heavenly days on which we meet:
Ah me, but where are now the songs I sang
When life was sweet because you called them sweet?

2

'Era già l'ora che volge il desio.'—DANTE.
'Ricorro al tempo ch' io vi vidi prima'.—PETRARCA.

I wish I could remember that first day,
First hour, first moment of your meeting me,
If bright or dim the season, it might be
Summer or Winter for aught I can say;
So unrecorded did it slip away,
So blind was I to see and to foresee,
So dull to mark the budding of my tree
That would not blossom yet for many a May.
If only I could recollect it, such
A day of days! I let it come and go
As traceless as a thaw of bygone snow:

It seemed to mean so little, meant so much ;
If only now I could recall that touch,
First touch of hand in hand—Did one but know !

3

'O ombre vane, fuor che ne l'aspetto !'—DANTE.
'Immaginata guida la conduce.'—PETRARCA.

I dream of you, to wake : would that I might
Dream of you and not wake but slumber on ;
Nor find with dreams the dear companion gone,
As, Summer ended, Summer birds take flight.
In happy dreams I hold you full in sight,
I blush again who waking look so wan ;
Brighter than sunniest day that ever shone,
In happy dreams your smile makes day of night.
Thus only in a dream we are at one,
Thus only in a dream we give and take
The faith that maketh rich who take or give ;
If thus to sleep is sweeter than to wake,
To die were surely sweeter than to live,
Though there be nothing new beneath the sun.

4

'Poca favilla gran fiamma seconda.'—DANTE.
'Ogni altra cosa, ogni pensier va fore,
E sol ivi con voi rimansi amore.'—PETRARCA.

I loved you first : but afterwards your love,
Outsoaring mine, sang such a loftier song
As drowned the friendly cooings of my dove.
Which owes the other most? My love was long,
And yours one moment seemed to wax more strong ;
I loved and guessed at you, you construed me
And loved me for what might or might not be—
Nay, weights and measures do us both a wrong.

For verily love knows not 'mine' or 'thine';
With separate 'I' and 'thou' free love has done,
For one is both and both are one in love:
Rich love knows nought of 'thine that is not mine';
Both have the strength and both the length thereof,
Both of us, of the love which makes us one.

5

'Amor che a nullo amato amar perdona.'—DANTE.
'Amor m'addusse in sì gioiosa spene.'—PETRARCA.

O my heart's heart, and you who are to me
More than myself myself, God be with you,
Keep you in strong obedience leal and true
To Him whose noble service setteth free;
Give you all good we see or can foresee,
Make your joys many and your sorrows few,
Bless you in what you bear and what you do,
Yea, perfect you as He would have you be.
So much for you; but what for me, dear friend?
To love you without stint and all I can,
To-day, to-morrow, world without an end;
To love you much and yet to love you more,
As Jordan at his flood sweeps either shore;
Since woman is the helpmeet made for man.

6

'Or puoi la quantitate
Comprender de l'amor che a te mi scalda.'—DANTE.
'Non vo' che da tal nodo amor mi scioglia.'—PETRARCA.

Trust me, I have not earned your dear rebuke—
I love, as you would have me, God the most;
Would lose not Him, but you, must one be lost,
Nor with Lot's wife cast back a faithless look,
Unready to forego what I forsook;

This say I, having counted up the cost,
This, though I be the feeblest of God's host,
The sorriest sheep Christ shepherds with His crook.
Yet while I love my God the most, I deem
That I can never love you over-much;
I love Him more, so let me love you too;
Yea, as I apprehend it, love is such
I cannot love you if I love not Him,
I cannot love Him if I love not you.

7

'Qui primavera sempre ed ogni frutto.'—DANTE.
'Ragionando con meco ed io con lui.'—PETRARCA.

'Love me, for I love you'—and answer me,
'Love me, for I love you': so shall we stand
As happy equals in the flowering land
Of love, that knows not a dividing sea.
Love builds the house on rock and not on sand,
Love laughs what while the winds rave desperately;
And who hath found love's citadel unmanned?
And who hath held in bonds love's liberty?—
My heart's a coward though my words are brave—
We meet so seldom, yet we surely part
So often; there's a problem for your art!
Still I find comfort in his Book who saith,
Though jealousy be cruel as the grave,
And death be strong, yet love is strong as death.

8

'Come dicesse a Dio, D'altro non calme.'—DANTE.
'Spero trovar pietà non che perdono.'—PETRARCA.

'I, if I perish, perish'—Esther spake:
And bride of life or death she made her fair
In all the lustre of her perfumed hair

And smiles that kindle longing but to slake.
She put on pomp of loveliness, to take
  Her husband through his eyes at unaware ;
  She spread abroad her beauty for a snare,
Harmless as doves and subtle as a snake.
She trapped him with one mesh of silken hair,
  She vanquished him by wisdom of her wit,
    And built her people's house that it should stand :—
    If I might take my life so in my hand,
And for my love to Love put up my pr yer,
  And for love's sake by Love be granted it !

9

'O dignitosa coscienza e netta !'—DANTE.
'Spirto più acceso di virtuti ardenti.'—PETRARCA.

Thinking of you, and all that was, and all
  That might have been and now can never be,
  I feel your honoured excellence, and see
Myself unworthy of the happier call :
For woe is me who walk so apt to fall,
  So apt to shrink afraid, so apt to flee,
  Apt to lie down and die (ah woe is me !)
Faithless and hopeless turning to the wall.
And yet not hopeless quite nor faithless quite,
Because not loveless ; love may toil all night,
But take at morning ; wrestle till the break
  Of day, but then wield power with God and man :
  So take I heart of grace as best I can,
Ready to spend and be spent for your sake.

IC

'Con miglior corso e con migliore stella.'—DANTE.
'La vita fugge e non s'arresta un' ora.'—PETRARCA.

Time flies, hope flags, life plies a wearied wing;
Death following hard on life gains ground apace;
Faith runs with each and rears an eager face,
Outruns the rest, makes light of everything,
Spurns earth, and still finds breath to pray and sing;
While love ahead of all uplifts his praise,
Still asks for grace and still gives thanks for grace,
Content with all day brings and night will bring.
Life wanes; and when love folds his wings above
Tired hope, and less we feel his conscious pulse,
Let us go fall asleep, dear friend, in peace:
A little while, and age and sorrow cease;
A little while, and life reborn annuls
Loss and decay and death, and all is love.

II

'Vien dietro a me e lascia dir le genti.'—DANTE.
'Contando i casi della vita nostra.'—PETRARCA.

Many in aftertimes will say of you
'He loved her'—while of me what will they say?
Not that I loved you more than just in play,
For fashion's sake as idle women do.
Even let them prate; who know not what we knew
Of love and parting in exceeding pain,
Of parting hopeless here to meet again,
Hopeless on earth, and heaven is out of view.
But by my heart of love laid bare to you,
My love that you can make not void nor vain,
Love that foregoes you but to claim anew

Beyond this passage of the gate of death,
I charge you at the Judgment make it plain
My love of you was life and not a breath.

12

'Amor che ne la mente mi ragiona.'—DANTE.
'Amor vien nel bel viso di costei.'—PETRARCA.

If there be any one can take my place
And make you happy whom I grieve to grieve,
Think not that I can grudge it, but believe
I do commend you to that nobler grace,
That readier wit than mine, that sweeter face;
Yea, since your riches make me rich, conceive
I too am crowned while bridal crowns I weave,
And thread the bridal dance with jocund pace.
For if I did not love you, it might be
That I should grudge you some one dear delight;
But since the heart is yours that was mine own,
Your pleasure is my pleasure, right my right,
Your honourable freedom makes me free,
And you companioned I am not alone.

13

'E drizzeremo gli occhi al Primo Amore.'—DANTE.
'Ma trovo peso non da le mie braccia.'—PETRARCA

If I could trust mine own self with your fate,
Shall I not rather trust it in God's hand?
Without Whose Will one lily doth not stand,
Nor sparrow fall at his appointed date;
Who numbereth the innumerable sand,
Who weighs the wind and water with a weight,
To Whom the world is neither small nor great,
Whose knowledge foreknew every plan we planned.

Searching my heart for all that touches you,
I find there only love and love's goodwill
Helpless to help and impotent to do,
Of understanding dull, of sight most dim;
And therefore I commend you back to Him
Whose love your love's capacity can fill.

14

'E la Sua Volontade è nostra pace.'—DANTE.
'Sol con questi pensier, con altre chiome.'—PETRARCA.

Youth gone, and beauty gone if ever there
Dwelt beauty in so poor a face as this;
Youth gone and beauty, what remains of bliss?
I will not bind fresh roses in my hair,
To shame a cheek at best but little fair,—
Leave youth his roses, who can bear a thorn,—
I will not seek for blossoms anywhere,
Except such common flowers as blow with corn.
Youth gone and beauty gone, what doth remain?
The longing of a heart pent up forlorn,
A silent heart whose silence loves and longs;
The silence of a heart which sang its songs
While youth and beauty made a summer morn,
Silence of love that cannot sing again.

SWEET DEATH

THE sweetest blossoms die.
And so it was that, going day by day
Unto the Church to praise and pray,
And crossing the green churchyard thoughtfully,
I saw how on the graves the flowers
Shed their fresh leaves in showers,
And how their perfume rose up to the sky
Before it passed away.

The youngest blossoms die.
They die and fall and nourish the rich earth
From which they lately had their birth;
Sweet life, but sweeter death that passeth by
And is as though it had not been:—
All colours turn to green;
The bright hues vanish, and the odours fly,
The grass hath lasting worth.

And youth and beauty die.
So be it, O my God, Thou God of Truth:
Better than beauty and than youth
Are Saints and Angels, a glad company;
And Thou, O Lord, our Rest and Ease,
Art better far than these.
Why should we shrink from our full harvest? why
Prefer to glean with Ruth?

ONE CERTAINTY

VANITY of vanities, the Preacher saith,
All things are vanity. The eye and ear
Cannot be filled with what they see and hear.
Like early dew, or like the sudden breath
Of wind, or like the grass that withereth,
Is man, tossed to and fro by hope and fear:
So little joy hath he, so little cheer,
Till all things end in the long dust of death.
To-day is still the same as yesterday,
To-morrow also even as one of them;
And there is nothing new under the sun:
Until the ancient race of Time be run,
The old thorns shall grow out of the old stem,
And morning shall be cold and twilight grey.

A TESTIMONY

I SAID of laughter: it is vain.
Of mirth I said: what profits it?
Therefore I found a book, and writ
Therein how ease and also pain,
How health and sickness, every one
Is vanity beneath the sun.

Man walks in a vain shadow; he
Disquieteth himself in vain.
The things that were shall be again;
The rivers do not fill the sea,
But turn back to their secret source;
The winds too turn upon their course.

Our treasures moth and rust corrupt,
Or thieves break through and steal, or they
Make themselves wings and fly away.
One man made merry as he supped,
Nor guessed how when that night grew dim
His soul would be required of him.

We build our houses on the sand
Comely withoutside and within;
But when the winds and rains begin
To beat on them, they cannot stand:
They perish, quickly overthrown,
Loose from the very basement stone.

All things are vanity, I said:
Yea vanity of vanities.
The rich man dies; and the poor dies:
he worm feeds sweetly on the dead.
Whate'er thou lackest, keep this trust:
All in the end shall have but dust:

The one inheritance, which best
And worst alike shall find and share:
The wicked cease from troubling there
And there the weary be at rest;
There all the wisdom of the wise
Is vanity of vanities.

Man flourishes as a green leaf,
And as a leaf doth pass away;
Or as a shade that cannot stay
And leaves no track, his course is brief:
Yet man doth hope and fear and plan
Till he is dead:—oh foolish man!

Our eyes cannot be satisfied
  With seeing, nor our ears be filled
  With hearing : yet we plant and build
And buy and make our borders wide ;
We gather wealth, we gather care,
But know not who shall be our heir.

Why should we hasten to arise
  So early, and so late take rest ?
  Our labour is not good ; our best
Hopes fade ; our heart is stayed on lies.
Verily, we sow wind ; and we
Shall reap the whirlwind, verily.

He who hath little shall not lack ;
  He who hath plenty shall decay :
  Our fathers went ; we pass away ;
Our children follow on our track :
So generations fail, and so
They are renewed and come and go.

The earth is fattened with our dead ;
  She swallows more and doth not cease :
  Therefore her wine and oil increase
And her sheaves are not numberèd ;
Therefore her plants are green, and all
Her pleasant trees lusty and tall.

Therefore the maidens cease to sing,
  And the young men are very sad ;
  Therefore the sowing is not glad,
And mournful is the harvesting.
Of high and low, of great and small,
Vanity is the lot of all.

A King dwelt in Jerusalem ;
He was the wisest man on earth ;
He had all riches from his birth,
And pleasures till he tired of them ;
Then, having tested all things, he
Witnessed that all are vanity.

ADVENT

'COME,' Thou dost say to Angels,
To blessed Spirits, 'Come' :
'Come,' to the lambs of Thine own flock,
Thy little ones, 'Come home.'

'Come,' from the many-mansioned house
The gracious word is sent ;
'Come,' from the ivory palaces
Unto the Penitent.

O Lord, restore us deaf and blind,
Unclose our lips though dumb :
Then say to us, 'I come with speed,'
And we will answer, 'Come.'

EYE HATH NOT SEEN

OUR feet shall tread upon the stars
Less bright than we.
The everlasting shore shall bound
A fairer sea
Than that which cold
Now glitters in the sun like gold.

Oh good, oh blest! but who shall say
  How fair, how fair,
Is the light-region where no cloud
  Darkens the air,
  Where weary eyes
Rest on the green of Paradise?

There cometh not the wind nor rain
  Nor sun nor snow:
The Trees of Knowledge and of Life
  Bud there and blow,
  Their leaves and fruit
Fed from an undecaying root.

There Angels flying to and fro
  Are not more white
Than Penitents some while ago,
  Now Saints in light:
  Once soiled and sad—
Cleansed now and crowned, fulfilled and glad.

Now yearning through the perfect rest
  Perhaps they gaze
Earthwards upon their best-beloved
  In all earth's ways:
  Longing, but not
With pain, as used to be their lot.

The hush of that beatitude
  Is ages long,
Sufficing Virgins, Prophets, Saints,
  Till the new song
  Shall be sent up
From lips which drained the bitter cup.

If but the thought of Paradise
  Gives joy on earth,
What shall it be to enter there
  Through second birth?
  To find once more
Our dearest treasure gone before?

To find the Shepherd of the sheep,
  The Lamb once slain,
Who leads His own by living streams—
  Never again
  To thirst, or need
Aught in green pastures where they feed.

But from the altar comes a cry
  Awful and strong
From martyred Saints: 'How long,' they say,
  'O Lord, how long,
  Holy and True,
Shall vengeance for our blood be due?'

Then the Lord gives them robes of white,
  And bids them stay
In patience till the time be full
  For the last day—
  The day of dread
When the last sentence shall be said;

When heaven and earth shall flee away,
  And the great deep
Shall render up her dead, and earth
  Her sons that sleep,
  And day of grace
Be hid for ever from Thy face.

Oh hide us, till Thy wrath be past,
Our grief, our shame,
With Peter and with Magdalene,
And him whose name
No record tells
Who by Thy promise with Thee dwells.

A BRUISED REED SHALL HE NOT BREAK

I WILL accept thy will to do and be,
Thy hatred and intolerance of sin,
Thy will at least to love, that burns within
And thirsteth after Me:
So will I render fruitful, blessing still,
The germs and small beginnings in thy heart,
Because thy will cleaves to the better part.—
Alas, I cannot will.

Dost not thou will, poor soul? Yet I receive
The inner unseen longings of the soul,
I guide them turning towards Me; I control
And charm hearts till they grieve:
If thou desire, it yet shall come to pass,
Though thou but wish indeed to choose My love;
For I have power in earth and heaven above.—
I cannot wish, alas!

What, neither choose nor wish to choose? and yet
I still must strive to win thee and constrain:
For thee I hung upon the cross in pain,
How then can I forget?

If thou as yet dost neither love nor hate
Nor choose nor wish,—resign thyself, be still,
Till I infuse love, hatred, longing, will.—
I do not deprecate.

MOONSHINE

Fair the sun riseth,
Bright as bright can be,
Fair the sun shineth
On a fair fair sea.

'Across the water
Wilt thou come with me,
Miles and long miles, love,
Over the salt sea?'

'If thou wilt hold me
Truly by the hand,
I will go with thee
Over sea and sand.

'If thou wilt hold me
That I shall not fall,
I will go with thee,
Love, in spite of all.'

Fair the moon riseth
On her heavenly way,
Making the waters
Fairer than by day.

A little vessel
Rocks upon the sea,
Where stands a maiden
Fair as fair can be.

Her smile rejoices
Though her mouth is mute:
She treads the vessel
With her little foot.

Truly he holds her
Faithful to his pledge,
Guiding the vessel
From the water's edge.

Fair the moon saileth
With her pale fair light,
Fair the girl gazeth
Out into the night.

Saith she, 'Like silver
Shines thy hair, not gold':
Saith she, 'I shiver
In thy steady hold.

Love,' she saith weeping,
'Loose thy hold awhile;
My heart is freezing
In thy freezing smile.'

The moon is hidden
By a silver cloud,
Fair as a halo
Or a maiden's shroud.

No more beseeching,
Ever on they go:
The vessel rocketh
Softly to and fro:

And still he holds her
That she shall not fall,
Till pale mists whiten
Dimly over all.

Onward and onward,
Far across the sea:
Onward and onward,
Pale as pale can be:

Onward and onward,
Ever hand in hand,
From sun and moonlight
To another land.

THE HEART KNOWETH ITS OWN BITTERNESS

Weep yet awhile,—
Weep till that day shall dawn when thou shalt smile:
Watch till the day
When all save only love shall pass away.

Weep, sick and lonely,
Bow thy heart to tears,
For none shall guess the secret
Of thy griefs and fears.
Weep, till the day dawn,
Refreshing dew:

Weep till the spring:
For genial showers
Bring up the flowers,
And thou shalt sing
In summertime of blossoming.

Heart-sick and silent,
Weep and watch in pain.
Weep for hope perished,
Not to live again:
Weep for love's hope and fear
And passion vain.
Watch till the day
When all save only love shall pass away.

Then love rejoicing
Shall forget to weep:
Shall hope or fear no more,
Or watch, or sleep,
But only love and cease not,
Deep beyond deep.
Now we sow love in tears,
But then shall reap.
Have patience as the Lord's own flock of sheep:
Have patience with His love
Who died below, who lives for thee above.

WHITSUN EVE

The white dove cooeth in her downy nest,
Keeping her young ones warm beneath her breast:
The white moon saileth through the cool clear sky,
Screened by a tender mist in passing by:

The white rose buds, with thorns upon its stem,
All the more precious and more dear for them :
The stream shines silver in the tufted grass,
The white clouds scarcely dim it as they pass ;
Deep in the valleys lily cups are white,
They send up incense all the holy night.
Our souls are white, made clean in Blood once shed :
White blessed Angels watch around our bed :—
O spotless Lamb of God, still keep us so,
Thou who wert born for us in time of snow.

THERE REMAINETH THEREFORE A REST FOR THE PEOPLE OF GOD

I

'Ye have forgotten the exhortation.'

Come, blessed sleep, most full, most perfect, come :
  Come, sleep, if so I may forget the whole ;
  Forget my body and forget my soul,
Forget how long life is and troublesome.
Come, happy sleep, to soothe my heart or numb,
  Arrest my weary spirit or control :
  Till light be dark to me from pole to pole,
And winds and echoes and low songs be dumb.
Come, sleep, and lap me into perfect calm,
  Lap me from all the world and weariness :
Come, secret sleep, with thine unuttered psalm,
  Safe sheltering in a hidden cool recess :
  Come, heavy dreamless sleep, and close and press
Upon mine eyes thy fingers dropping balm.

II

'Which speaketh unto you as unto children.'

ART thou so weary then, poor thirsty soul?
Have patience, in due season thou shalt sleep.
Mount yet a little while, the path is steep:
Strain yet a little while to reach the goal:
Do battle with thyself, achieve, control:
Till night come down with blessed slumber deep
As love, and seal thine eyes no more to weep
Through long tired vigils while the planets roll.
Have patience, for thou too shalt sleep at length,
Lapt in the pleasant shade of Paradise.
My Hands that bled for thee shall close thine eyes,
My Heart that bled for thee shall be thy rest:
I will sustain with everlasting strength,
And thou, with John, shalt lie upon My breast.

A HARVEST

O GATE of death, of the blessed night,
That shall open not again
On this world of shame and sorrow,
Where slow ages wax and wane,
Where are signs and seasons, days and nights,
And mighty winds and rain.

Is the day wearing toward the west?—
Far off cool shadows pass,
A visible refreshment
Across the sultry grass:
Far off low mists are mustering,
A broken shifting mass.

Still in the deepest knowledge
Some depth is left unknown:
Still in the merriest music lurks
A plaintive undertone:
Still with the closest friend some throb
Of life is felt alone.

Time's summer breath is sweet, his sands
Ebb sparkling as they flow,
Yet some are sick that this should end
Which is from long ago:—
Are not the fields already white
To harvest in the glow?—

There shall come another harvest
Than was in days of yore:
The reapers shall be Angels,
Our God shall purge the floor:—
No more seed-time, no more harvest,
Then for evermore.

SLEEP AT SEA

SOUND the deep waters:—
Who shall sound that deep?—
Too short the plummet
And the watchmen sleep.
Some dream of effort
Up a toilsome steep;
Some dream of pasture grounds
For harmless sheep.

White shapes flit to and fro
From mast to mast;
They feel the distant tempest
That nears them fast:
Great rocks are straight ahead,
Great shoals not past;
They shout to one another
Upon the blast.

Oh soft the streams drop music
Between the hills,
And musical the birds' nests
Beside those rills:
The nests are types of home
Love-hidden from ills,
The nests are types of spirits
Love-music fills.

So dream the sleepers,
Each man in his place;
The lightning shows the smile
Upon each face:
The ship is driving,—driving,—
It drives apace:
And sleepers smile, and spirits
Bewail their case.

The lightning glares and reddens
Across the skies;
It seems but sunset
To those sleeping eyes.
When did the sun go down
On such a wise?
From such a sunset
When shall they arise?

'Wake,' call the spirits :
But to heedless ears :
They have forgotten sorrows
And hopes and fears ;
They have forgotten perils
And smiles and tears ;
Their dream has held them long,
Long years and years.

'Wake,' call the spirits again :
But it would take
A louder summons
To bid them awake.
Some dream of pleasure
For another's sake :
Some dream, forgetful
Of a lifelong ache.

One by one slowly,
Ah how sad and slow !
Wailing and praying
The spirits rise and go :
Clear stainless spirits,
White, as white as snow ;
Pale spirits, wailing
For an overthrow.

One by one flitting,
Like a mournful bird
Whose song is tired at last
For no mate heard.
The loving voice is silent,
The useless word ;
One by one flitting
Sick with hope deferred.

Driving and driving,
The ship drives amain :
While swift from mast to mast
Shapes flit again,
Flit silent as the silence
Where men lie slain ;
Their shadow cast upon the sails
Is like a stain.

No voice to call the sleepers,
No hand to raise :
They sleep to death in dreaming
Of length of days.
Vanity of vanities,
The Preacher says :
Vanity is the end
Of all their ways.

WHO HAVE A FORM OF GODLINESS

When I am sick and tired it is God's will :
Also God's will alone is sure and best :—
So in my weariness I find my rest,
And so in poverty I take my fill.
Therefore I see my good in midst of ill,
Therefore in loneliness I build my nest,
And through hot noon pant toward the shady west,
And hope in sickening disappointment still.
So, when the times of restitution come,
The sweet times of refreshing come at last,
My God shall fill my longings to the brim :
Therefore I wait and look and long for Him :
Not wearied though the work is wearisome,
Nor fainting though the time be almost past.

THERE REMAINETH THEREFORE A REST

In the grave will be no space
For the purple of the proud—
They must mingle with the crowd:
In the wrappings of a shroud
Jewels would be out of place.

There no laughter shall be heard,
Nor the heavy sound of sighs:
Sleep shall seal the aching eyes:
All the ancient and the wise
There shall utter not a word.

Yet it may be we shall hear
How the mounting skylark sings
And the bell for matins rings;
Or perhaps the whisperings
Of white Angels sweet and clear.

What a calm when all is done,
Wearing vigil, prayer, and fast!
All fulfilled from first to last:
All the length of time gone past
And eternity begun.

Fear and hope and chastening rod
Urge us on the narrow way:
Bear we still as best we may
Heat and burden of the day,
Struggling, panting up to God.

PARADISE

ONCE in a dream I saw the flowers
That bud and bloom in Paradise;
More fair they are than waking eyes
Have seen in all this world of ours.
And faint the perfume-bearing rose,
And faint the lily on its stem,
And faint the perfect violet,
Compared with them.

I heard the songs of Paradise:
Each bird sat singing in his place;
A tender song so full of grace
It soared like incense to the skies.
Each bird sat singing to his mate
Soft cooing notes among the trees:
The nightingale herself were cold
To such as these.

I saw the fourfold River flow,
And deep it was, with golden sand;
It flowed between a mossy land
With murmured music grave and low.
It hath refreshment for all thirst,
For fainting spirits strength and rest;
Earth holds not such a draught as this
From east to west.

The Tree of Life stood budding there,
Abundant with its twelvefold fruits;
Eternal sap sustains its roots,
Its shadowing branches fill the air.

Its leaves are healing for the world,
  Its fruit the hungry world can feed,
Sweeter than honey to the taste
    And balm indeed.

I saw the Gate called Beautiful;
  And looked, but scarce could look within;
  I saw the golden streets begin,
And outskirts of the glassy pool.
Oh harps, oh crowns of plenteous stars,
  Oh green palm branches many-leaved—
Eye hath not seen, nor ear hath heard,
    Nor heart conceived.

I hope to see these things again,
  But not as once in dreams by night;
  To see them with my very sight,
And touch and handle and attain:
To have all heaven beneath my feet
  For narrow way that once they trod;
To have my part with all the saints,
    And with my God.

YE HAVE FORGOTTEN THE EXHORTATION

ANGEL

  Bury thy dead, dear friend,
  Between the night and day:
Where depths of summer shade are cool,
And murmurs of a summer pool
  And windy murmurs stray:—

SOUL

Ah gone away,
Ah dear and lost delight,
Gone from me and for ever out of sight :

ANGEL

Bury thy dead, dear love,
And make his bed most fair above :
The latest buds shall still
Blow there, and the first violets too,
And there a turtle-dove
Shall brood and coo :—

SOUL

I cannot make the nest
So warm but he may find it chill
In solitary rest.

ANGEL

Bury thy dead heart-deep :
Take patience till the sun be set :
There are no tears for him to weep
No doubts to haunt him yet :
Take comfort, he will not forget :—

SOUL

Then I will watch beside his sleep :
Will watch alone,
And make my moan
Because the harvest is so long to reap.

ANGEL

The fields are white to harvest, look and see,
Are white abundantly.
The harvest-moon shines full and clear,
The harvest-time is near,
Be of good cheer :—

SOUL

Ah woe is me !
I have no heart for harvest-time,
Grown sick with hope deferred from chime to chime

ANGEL

But One can give thee heart, thy Lord and his,
Can raise both thee and him
To shine with Seraphim,
And pasture where the eternal fountain is ;
Can give thee of that tree
Whose leaves are health for thee ;
Can give thee robes made clean and white,
And love, and all delight,
And beauty where the day turns not to night.
Who knocketh at His door,
And presseth in, goes out no more.
Kneel as thou hast not knelt before—
The time is short—and smite
Upon thy breast and pray with all thy might :—

SOUL

O Lord, my heart is broken for my sin :
Yet hasten Thine own day
And come away.
Is not time full ? Oh put the sickle in,
O Lord, begin !

THE WORLD

By day she wooes me, soft, exceeding fair:
But all night as the moon so changeth she;
Loathsome and foul with hideous leprosy,
And subtle serpents gliding in her hair.
By day she wooes me to the outer air,
Ripe fruits, sweet flowers, and full satiety:
But thro' the night a beast she grins at me,
A very monster void of love and prayer.
By day she stands a lie: by night she stands
In all the naked horror of the truth,
With pushing horns and clawed and clutching hands.
Is this a friend indeed, that I should sell
My soul to her, give her my life and youth,
Till my feet, cloven too, take hold on hell?

ZION SAID

O SLAIN for love of me, canst Thou be cold,
Be cold and far away in my distress?
Is Thy love also changed, growing less and less,
That carried me through all the days of old?
O Slain for love of me, O Love untold,
See how I flag and fail through weariness:
I flag, while sleepless foes dog me and press
On me: behold, O Lord, O Love, behold!
I am sick for home, the home of love indeed—
I am sick for Love, that dearest name for Thee:
Thou who hast bled, see how my heart doth bleed:
Open Thy bleeding Side and let me in:
Oh hide me in Thy Heart from doubt and sin,
Oh take me to Thyself and comfort me.

I WILL LIFT UP MINE EYES UNTO THE HILLS

I AM pale with sick desire,
For my heart is far away
From this world's fitful fire
And this world's waning day;
In a dream it overleaps
A world of tedious ills
To where the sunshine sleeps
On the everlasting hills.—
Say the Saints: 'There Angels ease us
Glorified and white.'
They say: 'We rest in Jesus,
Where is not day or night.'

My soul saith: I have sought
For a home that is not gained,
I have spent yet nothing bought,
Have laboured but not attained;
My pride strove to mount and grow,
And hath but dwindled down;
My love sought love, and lo!
Hath not attained its crown.—
Say the Saints: 'Fresh souls increase us,
None languish or recede.'
They say: 'We love our Jesus,
And He loves us indeed.'

I cannot rise above,
I cannot rest beneath,
I cannot find out love,
Or escape from death;

Dear hopes and joys gone by
Still mock me with a name;
My best beloved die,
And I cannot die with them.—
Say the Saints: 'No deaths decrease us
Where our rest is glorious.'
They say: 'We live in Jesus
Who once died for us.'

Oh my soul, she beats her wings
And pants to fly away
Up to immortal things
In the heavenly day:
Yet she flags and almost faints:
Can such be meant for me?—
'Come and see,' say the Saints;
Saith Jesus: 'Come and see.'
Say the Saints: 'His pleasures please us
Before God and the Lamb.'
'Come and taste My sweets,' saith Jesus:
'Be with Me where I am.'

HOW LONG?

My life is long—Not so the Angels say
Who watch me waste it, trembling whilst they weigh
Against eternity my lavished day.

My life is long—Not so the Saints in peace
Judge, filled with plenitude that cannot cease:
Oh life was short which bought such large increase!

My life is long—Christ's word is different:
The heat and burden of the day were spent
On Him,—to me refreshing times are sent.

Give me an Angel's heart, that day nor night
Rests not from adoration its delight,
Still crying 'Holy holy' in the height.

Give me the heart of Saints, who, laid at rest
In better Paradise than Abraham's breast,
In the everlasting Rock have made their nest

Give me Thy heart, O Christ, who thirty-three
Slow years of sorrow countedst short for me,
That where Thou art there Thy beloved might be.

AMEN

It is over. What is over?
Nay, now much is over truly!—
Harvest days we toiled to sow for;
Now the sheaves are gathered newly,
Now the wheat is garnered duly.

It is finished. What is finished?
Much is finished known or unknown:
Lives are finished; time diminished;
Was the fallow field left unsown?
Will these buds be always unblown?

It suffices. What suffices?
All suffices reckoned rightly:
Spring shall bloom where now the ice is,
Roses make the bramble sightly,
And the quickening sun shine brightly,
And the latter wind blow lightly,
And my garden teem with spices.

NOW THEY DESIRE

THERE is a sleep we have not slept,
Safe in a bed unknown:
There hearts are staunched that long have wept
Alone or bled alone:
Sweet sleep that dreams not, or whose dream
Is foretaste of the truth:
Sweet sleep whose sweets are what they seem,
Refreshing more than youth.

There is a sea whose waters clear
Are never tempest-tost:
There is a home whose children dear
Are saved, not one is lost:
There Cherubim and Seraphim
And Angels dwell with Saints,
Whose lustre no more dwindleth dim,
Whose ardour never faints.

There is a Love which fills desire
And can our love requite:
Like fire it draws our lesser fire,
Like greater light our light:
For it we agonize in strife,
We yearn, we famish thus—
Lo in the far-off land of life
Doth it not yearn for us?

O fair, O fair Jerusalem,
How fair, how far away,
When shall we see thy Jasper-gem
That gives thee light for day?

Thy sea of glass like fire, thy streets
  Of glass like virgin gold,
Thy royal Elders on their seats,
  Thy four Beasts manifold?

Fair City of delights, the Bride
  In raiment white and clean,
When shall we see thee loving-eyed,
  Sun-girdled, happy Queen?
Without a wrinkle or a spot,
  Blood-cleansed, blood-purchased once:
In how fair ground is fallen the lot
  Of all thy happy sons!

Dove's eyes beneath thy parted lock,
  A dove's soft voice is thine:
Thy nest is safe within the Rock,
  Safe in the very Vine:
Thy walls salvation buildeth them
  And all thy gates are praise,
O fair, O fair Jerusalem,
  In sevenfold day of days.

A CHRISTMAS CAROL

For my Godchildren.

THE Shepherds had an Angel,
  The Wise Men had a star,
But what have I, a little child,
  To guide me home from far,
Where glad stars sing together
  And singing angels are?—

Lord Jesus is my Guardian,
So I can nothing lack:
The lambs lie in His bosom
Along life's dangerous track:
The wilful lambs that go astray
He bleeding fetches back.

Lord Jesus is my guiding star,
My beacon-light in heaven:
He leads me step by step along
The path of life uneven:
He, true light, leads me to that land
Whose day shall be as seven.

Those Shepherds through the lonely night
Sat watching by their sheep,
Until they saw the heavenly host
Who neither tire nor sleep,
All singing 'Glory glory'
In festival they keep.

Christ watches me, His little lamb,
Cares for me day and night,
That I may be His own in heaven:
So angels clad in white
Shall sing their 'Glory glory'
For my sake in the height.

The Wise Men left their country
To journey morn by morn,
With gold and frankincense and myrrh
Because the Lord was born:
God sent a star to guide them
And sent a dream to warn.

My life is like their journey,
Their star is like God's book;
I must be like those good Wise Men
With heavenward heart and look:
But shall I give no gifts to God?—
What precious gifts they took!

Lord, I will give my love to Thee,
Than gold much costlier,
Sweeter to Thee than frankincense,
More prized than choicest myrrh:
Lord, make me dearer day by day,
Day by day holier;

Nearer and dearer day by day:
Till I my voice unite,
And sing my 'Glory glory'
With angels clad in white;
All 'Glory glory' given to Thee
Through all the heavenly height.

NOT YOURS BUT YOU

'He died for me: what can I offer Him?
Toward Him swells incense of perpetual prayer:
His court wear crowns and aureoles round their hair:
His ministers are subtle Cherubim;
Ring within ring, white intense Seraphim
Leap like immortal lightnings through the air.
What shall I offer Him? defiled and bare,
My spirit broken and my brightness dim.'—

'Give Me thy youth.'—'I yield it to Thy rod,
As Thou didst yield Thy prime of youth for me.'—
'Give Me thy life.'—'I give it breath by breath;
As Thou didst give Thy life so give I Thee.'—
'Give Me thy love.'—'So be it, my God, my God,
As Thou hast loved me even to bitter death.'

AFTER THIS THE JUDGMENT

As eager homebound traveller to the goal,
Or steadfast seeker on an unsearched main,
Or martyr panting for an aureole,
My fellow-pilgrims pass me, and attain
That hidden mansion of perpetual peace
Where keen desire and hope dwell free from pain.
That gate stands open of perennial ease;
I view the glory till I partly long,
Yet lack the fire of love which quickens these.
O passing Angel, speed me with a song,
A melody of heaven to reach my heart
And rouse me to the race and make me strong;
Till in such music I take up my part
Swelling those Hallelujahs full of rest,
One, tenfold, hundredfold, with heavenly art,
Fulfilling north and south and east and west,
Thousand, ten thousandfold, innumerable,
All blent in one yet each one manifest;
Each one distinguished and beloved as well
As if no second voice in earth or heaven
Were lifted up the Love of God to tell.
Ah Love of God, which Thine own Self hast given
To me most poor, and made me rich in love,

Love that dost pass the tenfold seven times seven,
Draw Thou mine eyes, draw Thou my heart above,
My treasure and my heart store Thou in Thee;
Brood over me with yearnings of a dove;
Be Husband, Brother, closest Friend to me;
Love me as very mother loves her son,
Her sucking firstborn fondled on her knee:
Yea, more than mother loves her little one;
For, earthly, even a mother may forget
And feel no pity for its piteous moan.
But Thou, O Love of God, remember yet,
Through the dry desert, through the waterflood
(Life, death), until the Great White Throne is set.
If now I am sick in chewing the bitter cud
Of sweet past sin, though solaced by Thy grace
And ofttimes strengthened by Thy Flesh and Blood,
How shall I then stand up before Thy face
When from Thine eyes repentance shall be hid
And utmost Justice stand in Mercy's place,
When every sin I thought or spoke or did
Shall meet me at the inexorable bar,
And there be no man standing in the mid
To plead for me; while star fallen after star
With heaven and earth are like a ripened shock,
And all time's mighty works and wonders are
Consumed as in a moment; when no rock
Remains to fall on me, no tree to hide,
But I stand all creation's gazing-stock,
Exposed and comfortless on every side,
Placed trembling in the final balances
Whose poise this hour, this moment, must be tried.—
Ah Love of God, if greater love than this
Hath no man, that a man die for his friend,
And if such love of love Thine own Love is,
Plead with Thyself, with me, before the end;

Redeem me from the irrevocable past;
  Pitch Thou Thy Presence round me to defend;
Yea seek with piercèd feet, yea hold me fast
  With piercèd hands whose wounds were made by love.
Not what I am, remember what Thou wast
  When darkness hid from Thee Thy heavens above,
And sin Thy Father's Face, while Thou didst drink
  The bitter cup of death, didst taste thereof
For every man; while Thou wast nigh to sink
  Beneath the intense intolerable rod,
Grown sick of love; not what I am, but think
  Thy Life then ransomed mine, my God, my God!

OLD AND NEW YEAR DITTIES

I

New Year met me somewhat sad:
  Old Year leaves me tired,
Stripped of favourite things I had,
  Baulked of much desired:
Yet farther on my road to-day,
God willing, farther on my way.

New Year coming on apace,
  What have you to give me?
Bring you scathe or bring you grace,
Face me with an honest face,
  You shall not deceive me.
Be it good or ill, be it what you will,
It needs shall help me on my road,
My rugged way to heaven, please God.

2

Watch with me, men, women, and children dear,
You whom I love, for whom I hope and fear,
Watch with me this last vigil of the year.
Some hug their business, some their pleasure scheme ;
Some seize the vacant hour to sleep or dream ;
Heart locked in heart some kneel and watch apart.

Watch with me, blessed spirits, who delight
All through the holy night to walk in white,
Or take your ease after the long-drawn fight.
I know not if they watch with me : I know
They count this eve of resurrection slow,
And cry 'How long?' with urgent utterance strong.

Watch with me, Jesus, in my loneliness :
Though others say me nay, yet say Thou yes ;
Though others pass me by, stop Thou to bless.
Yea, Thou dost stop with me this vigil night ;
To-night of pain, to-morrow of delight :
I, Love, am Thine ; Thou, Lord my God, art mine.

3

Passing away, saith the World, passing away :
Chances, beauty, and youth, sapped day by day :
Thy life never continueth in one stay.
Is the eye waxen dim, is the dark hair changing to grey
That hath won neither laurel nor bay?
I shall clothe myself in Spring and bud in May :
Thou, root-stricken, shalt not rebuild thy decay
On my bosom for aye.
Then I answered : Yea.

Passing away, saith my Soul, passing away :
With its burden of fear and hope, of labour and play,
Hearken what the past doth witness and say :
Rust in thy gold, a moth is in thine array,
A canker is in thy bud, thy leaf must decay.
At midnight, at cockcrow, at morning, one certain day
Lo the Bridegroom shall come and shall not delay ;
Watch thou and pray.
Then I answered : Yea.

Passing away, saith my God, passing away :
Winter passeth after the long delay :
New grapes on the vine, new figs on the tender spray,
Turtle calleth turtle in Heaven's May.
Though I tarry, wait for Me, trust Me, watch and pray :
Arise, come away, night is past and lo it is day,
My love, My sister, My spouse, thou shalt hear Me say.
Then I answered : Yea.

A BETTER RESURRECTION

I HAVE no wit, no words, no tears ;
My heart within me like a stone
Is numbed too much for hopes or fears.
Look right, look left, I dwell alone ;
I lift mine eyes, but dimmed with grief
No everlasting hills I see ;
My life is in the falling leaf :
O Jesus, quicken me.

My life is like a faded leaf,
  My harvest dwindled to a husk:
Truly my life is void and brief
  And tedious in the barren dusk;
My life is like a frozen thing,
  No bud nor greenness can I see;
Yet rise it shall—the sap of Spring;
    O Jesus, rise in me.

My life is like a broken bowl,
  A broken bowl that cannot hold
One drop of water for my soul
  Or cordial in the searching cold.
Cast in the fire the perished thing;
  Melt and remould it, till it be
A royal cup for Him, my King:
    O Jesus, drink of me.

THE HEART KNOWETH ITS OWN BITTERNESS

When all the over-work of life
  Is finished once, and fast asleep
We swerve no more beneath the knife
  But taste that silence cool and deep;
Forgetful of the highways rough,
  Forgetful of the thorny scourge,
  Forgetful of the tossing surge,
Then shall we find it is enough?

How can we say 'enough' on earth—
'Enough' with such a craving heart?
I have not found it since my birth,
But still have bartered part for part.
I have not held and hugged the whole,
But paid the old to gain the new:
Much have I paid, yet much is due,
Till I am beggared sense and soul.

I used to labour, used to strive
For pleasure with a restless will:
Now if I save my soul alive
All else what matters, good or ill?
I used to dream alone, to plan
Unspoken hopes and days to come:—
Of all my past this is the sum—
I will not lean on child of man.

To give, to give, not to receive!
I long to pour myself, my soul,
Not to keep back or count or leave,
But king with king to give the whole.
I long for one to stir my deep—
I have had enough of help and gift—
I long for one to search and sift
Myself, to take myself and keep.

You scratch my surface with your pin,
You stroke me smooth with hushing breath:—
Nay pierce, nay probe, nay dig within,
Probe my quick core and sound my depth.
You call me with a puny call,
You talk, you smile, you nothing do:
How should I spend my heart on you,
My heart that so outweighs you all?

Your vessels are by much too strait:
  Were I to pour, you could not hold.—
Bear with me: I must bear to wait,
  A fountain sealed through heat and cold.
Bear with me days or months or years:
  Deep must call deep until the end
  When friend shall no more envy friend
Nor vex his friend at unawares.

Not in this world of hope deferred,
  This world of perishable stuff:—
Eye hath not seen nor ear hath heard
  Nor heart conceived that full 'enough':
Here moans the separating sea,
  Here harvests fail, here breaks the heart:
  There God shall join and no man part,
I full of Christ and Christ of me.

FROM HOUSE TO HOME

THE first was like a dream through summer heat,
  The second like a tedious numbing swoon
While the half-frozen pulses lagged to beat
  Beneath a winter moon.

'But,' says my friend, 'what was this thing and where?'
  It was a pleasure-place within my soul;
An earthly paradise supremely fair
  That lured me from the goal.

The first part was a tissue of hugged lies ;
The second was its ruin fraught with pain
Why raise the fair delusion to the skies
But to be dashed again ?

My castle stood of white transparent glass
Glittering and frail with many a fretted spire,
But when the summer sunset came to pass
It kindled into fire.

My pleasaunce was an undulating green,
Stately with trees whose shadows slept below,
With glimpses of smooth garden-beds between
Like flame or sky or snow.

Swift squirrels on the pastures took their ease,
With leaping lambs safe from the unfeared knife ;
All singing-birds rejoicing in those trees
Fulfilled their careless life.

Woodpigeons cooed there, stock-doves nestled there ;
My trees were full of songs and flowers and fruit ;
Their branches spread a city to the air
And mice lodged in their root.

My heath lay farther off, where lizards lived
In strange metallic mail, just spied and gone ;
Like darted lightnings here and there perceived
But nowhere dwelt upon.

Frogs and fat toads were there to hop or plod
And propagate in peace, an uncouth crew,
Where velvet-headed rushes rustling nod
And spill the morning dew.

All caterpillars throve beneath my rule,
With snails and slugs in corners out of sight;
I never marred the curious sudden stool
That perfects in a night.

Safe in his excavated gallery
The burrowing mole groped on from year to year;
No harmless hedgehog curled because of me
His prickly back for fear.

Oft-times one like an angel walked with me,
With spirit-discerning eyes like flames of fire
But deep as the unfathomed endless sea,
Fulfilling my desire:

And sometimes like a snowdrift he was fair,
And sometimes like a sunset glorious red,
And sometimes he had wings to scale the air
With aureole round his head.

We sang our songs together by the way,
Calls and recalls and echoes of delight;
So communed we together all the day,
And so in dreams by night.

I have no words to tell what way we walked,
What unforgotten path now closed and sealed:
I have no words to tell all things we talked,
All things that he revealed:

This only can I tell: that hour by hour
I waxed more feastful, lifted up and glad;
I felt no thorn-prick when I plucked a flower,
Felt not my friend was sad.

'To-morrow,' once I said to him with smiles.
'To-night,' he answered gravely; and was dumb,
But pointed out the stones that numbered miles
And miles and miles to come.

'Not so,' I said: 'to-morrow shall be sweet:
To-night is not so sweet as coming days.'
Then first I saw that he had turned his feet,
Had turned from me his face:

Running and flying miles and miles he went,
But once looked back to beckon with his hand,
And cry: 'Come home, O love, from banishment:
Come to the distant land.'

That night destroyed me like an avalanche;
One night turned all my summer back to snow:
Next morning not a bird upon my branch,
Not a lamb woke below,—

No bird, no lamb, no living breathing thing;
No squirrel scampered on my breezy lawn,
No mouse lodged by his hoard: all joys took wing
And fled before that dawn.

Azure and sun were starved from heaven above,
No dew had fallen, but biting frost lay hoar:
O love, I knew that I should meet my love,
Should find my love no more.

'My love no more,' I muttered, stunned with pain:
I shed no tear, I wrung no passionate hand,
Till something whispered: 'You shall meet again,
Meet in a distant land.'

Then with a cry like famine I arose,
I lit my candle, searched from room to room,
Searched up and down ; a war of winds that froze
Swept through the blank of gloom.

I searched day after day, night after night ;
Scant change there came to me of night or day :
'No more,' I wailed, 'no more :' and trimmed my light,
And gnashed but did not pray,

Until my heart broke and my spirit broke :
Upon the frost-bound floor I stumbled, fell,
And moaned : 'It is enough : withhold the stroke.
Farewell, O love, farewell.'

Then life swooned from me. And I heard the song
Of spheres and spirits rejoicing over me :
One cried : 'Our sister, she hath suffered long.'—
One answered : 'Make her see.'

One cried : 'Oh blessèd she who no more pain,
Who no more disappointment shall receive.'—
One answered : 'Not so : she must live again ;
Strengthen thou her to live.'

So while I lay entranced a curtain seemed
To shrivel with crackling from before my face :
Across mine eyes a waxing radiance beamed
And showed a certain place.

I saw a vision of a woman, where
Night and new morning strive for domination ;
Incomparably pale, and almost fair,
And sad beyond expression.

Her eyes were like some fire-enshrining gem,
Were stately like the stars, and yet were tender;
Her figure charmed me like a windy stem
Quivering and drooped and slender.

I stood upon the outer barren ground,
She stood on inner ground that budded flowers;
While circling in their never-slackening round
Danced by the mystic hours.

But every flower was lifted on a thorn,
And every thorn shot upright from its sands
To gall her feet; hoarse laughter pealed in scorn
With cruel clapping hands.

She bled and wept, yet did not shrink; her strength
Was strung up until daybreak of delight:
She measured measureless sorrow toward its length,
And breadth, and depth, and height.

Then marked I how a chain sustained her form,
A chain of living links not made nor riven:
It stretched sheer up through lightning, wind, and storm,
And anchored fast in heaven.

One cried: 'How long? yet founded on the Rock
She shall do battle, suffer, and attain.'—
One answered: 'Faith quakes in the tempest shock—
Strengthen her soul again.'

I saw a cup sent down and come to her
Brimfull of loathing and of bitterness:
She drank with livid lips that seemed to stir
The depth, not make it less.

But as she drank I spied a hand distil
New wine and virgin honey ; making it
First bitter-sweet, then sweet indeed, until
She tasted only sweet.

Her lips and cheeks waxed rosy-fresh and young ;
Drinking she sang ' My soul shall nothing want ' ;
And drank anew : while soft a song was sung,
A mystical slow chant.

One cried : ' The wounds are faithful of a friend :
The wilderness shall blossom as a rose.'—
One answered : ' Rend the veil, declare the end,
Strengthen her ere she goes.'

Then earth and heaven were rolled up like a scroll ;
Time and space, change and death, had passed away ;
Weight, number, measure, each had reached its whole :
The day had come, that day.

Multitudes—multitudes—stood up in bliss,
Made equal to the angels, glorious, fair ;
With harps, palms, wedding-garments, kiss of peace,
And crowned and haloed hair.

They sang a song, a new song in the height,
Harping with harps to Him who is strong and true :
They drank new wine, their eyes saw with new light,
Lo all things were made new.

Tier beyond tier they rose and rose and rose,
So high that it was dreadful, flames with flames :
No man could number them, no tongue disclose
Their secret sacred names.

As though one pulse stirred all, one rush of blood
Fed all, one breath swept through them myriad-voiced,
They struck their harps, cast down their crowns, they stood
And worshipped and rejoiced.

Each face looked one way like a moon new-lit,
Each face looked one way towards its Sun of Love;
Drank love and bathed in love and mirrored it
And knew no end thereof.

Glory touched glory on each blessèd head,
Hands locked dear hands never to sunder more:
These were the new-begotten from the dead
Whom the great birthday bore.

Heart answered heart, soul answered soul at rest,
Double against each other, filled, sufficed:
All loving, loved of all; but loving best
And best beloved of Christ.

I saw that one who lost her love in pain,
Who trod on thorns, who drank the loathsome cup;
The lost in night, in day was found again;
The fallen was lifted up.

They stood together in the blessèd noon,
They sang together through the length of days;
Each loving face bent Sunwards like a moon
New-lit with love and praise.

Therefore, O friend, I would not if I might
Rebuild my house of lies, wherein I joyed
One time to dwell: my soul shall walk in white,
Cast down but not destroyed.

Therefore in patience I possess my soul ;
Yea, therefore as a flint I set my face,
To pluck down, to build up again the whole—
But in a distant place.

These thorns are sharp, yet I can tread on them ;
This cup is loathsome, yet He makes it sweet :
My face is steadfast toward Jerusalem,
My heart remembers it.

I lift the hanging hands, the feeble knees—
I, precious more than seven times molten gold—
Until the day when from His storehouses
God shall bring new and old ;

Beauty for ashes, oil of joy for grief,
Garment of praise for spirit of heaviness :
Although to-day I fade as doth a leaf,
I languish and grow less.

Although to-day He prunes my twigs with pain,
Yet doth His blood nourish and warm my root :
To-morrow I shall put forth buds again
And clothe myself with fruit.

Although to-day I walk in tedious ways,
To-day His staff is turned into a rod,
Yet will I wait for Him the appointed days
And stay upon my God.

ADVENT

THIS Advent moon shines cold and clear,
These Advent nights are long;
Our lamps have burned year after year
And still their flame is strong.
'Watchman, what of the night?' we cry,
Heart-sick with hope deferred:
'No speaking signs are in the sky,'
Is still the watchman's word.

The Porter watches at the gate,
The servants watch within;
The watch is long betimes and late,
The prize is slow to win.
'Watchman, what of the night?' But still
His answer sounds the same:
'No daybreak tops the utmost hill,
Nor pale our lamps of flame.'

One to another hear them speak
The patient virgins wise:
'Surely He is not far to seek'—
'All night we watch and rise.'
'The days are evil looking back,
The coming days are dim;
Yet count we not His promise slack,
But watch and wait for Him.'

One with another, soul with soul,
They kindle fire from fire:
'Friends watch us who have touched the goal.'
'They urge us, come up higher.'

'With them shall rest our waysore feet,
With them is built our home,
With Christ.'—'They sweet, but He most sweet,
Sweeter than honeycomb.'

There no more parting, no more pain,
The distant ones brought near,
The lost so long are found again,
Long lost but longer dear:
Eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard,
Nor heart conceived that rest,
With them our good things long deferred,
With Jesus Christ our Best

We weep because the night is long,
We laugh for day shall rise,
We sing a slow contented song
And knock at Paradise.
Weeping we hold Him fast Who wept
For us, we hold Him fast;
And will not let Him go except
He bless us first or last.

Weeping we hold Him fast to-night;
We will not let Him go
Till daybreak smite our wearied sight
And summer smite the snow:
Then figs shall bud, and dove with dove
Shall coo the livelong day;
Then He shall say, 'Arise, My love,
My fair one, come away.'

THE LOVE OF CHRIST WHICH PASSETH KNOWLEDGE

I BORE with thee long weary days and nights,
Through many pangs of heart, through many tears;
I bore with thee, thy hardness, coldness, slights,
For three-and-thirty years.

Who else had dared for thee what I have dared?
I plunged the depth most deep from bliss above;
I not My flesh, I not My spirit spared:
Give thou Me love for love.

For thee I thirsted in the daily drouth,
For thee I trembled in the nightly frost:
Much sweeter thou than honey to My mouth:
Why wilt thou still be lost?

I bore thee on My shoulders and rejoiced:
Men only marked upon My shoulders borne
The branding cross; and shouted hungry-voiced,
Or wagged their heads in scorn.

Thee did nails grave upon My hands, thy name
Did thorns for frontlets stamp between Mine eyes:
I, Holy One, put on thy guilt and shame;
I, God, Priest, Sacrifice.

A thief upon My right hand and My left;
Six hours alone, athirst, in misery:
At length in death one smote My heart and cleft
A hiding-place for thee.

Nailed to the racking cross, than bed of down
More dear, whereon to stretch Myself and sleep:
So did I win a kingdom,—Share My crown;
A harvest,—Come and reap.

A CHRISTMAS CAROL

Before the paling of the stars,
Before the winter morn,
Before the earliest cock-crow
Jesus Christ was born:
Born in a stable,
Cradled in a manger,
In the world His hands had made
Born a stranger.

Priest and King lay fast asleep
In Jerusalem,
Young and old lay fast asleep
In crowded Bethlehem:
Saint and Angel, ox and ass,
Kept a watch together,
Before the Christmas daybreak
In the winter weather.

Jesus on his Mother's breast
In the stable cold,
Spotless Lamb of God was He,
Shepherd of the fold:
Let us kneel with Mary Maid,
With Joseph bent and hoary,
With Saint and Angel, ox and ass,
To hail the King of Glory.

EASTER EVEN

THERE is nothing more that they can do
For all their rage and boast:
Caiaphas with his blaspheming crew,
Herod with his host;

Pontius Pilate in his judgment hall
Judging their Judge and his,
Or he who led them all and passed them all,
Arch-Judas with his kiss.

The sepulchre made sure with ponderous stone,
Seal that same stone, O priest:
It may be thou shalt block the Holy One
From rising in the east.

Set a watch about the sepulchre
To watch on pain of death:
They must hold fast the stone if One should stir
And shake it from beneath.

God Almighty, He can break a seal,
And roll away a stone:
Can grind the proud in dust who would not kneel,
And crush the mighty one.

There is nothing more that they can do
For all their passionate care,
Those who sit in dust, the blessed few,
And weep and rend their hair—

Peter, Thomas, Mary Magdalen,
The Virgin unreproved,
Joseph and Nicodemus foremost men,
And John the well-beloved.

Bring your finest linen and your spice,
Swathe the sacred Dead,
Bind with careful hands and piteous eyes
The napkin round His head:

Lay Him in the garden-rock to rest:
Rest you the Sabbath length:
The Sun that went down crimson in the west
Shall rise renewed in strength.

God Almighty shall give joy for pain,
Shall comfort him who grieves:
Lo He with joy shall doubtless come again
And with Him bring His sheaves.

THE OFFERING OF THE NEW LAW

Once I thought to sit so high
In the palace of the sky:
Now I thank God for His grace
If I may fill the lowest place.

Once I thought to scale so soon
Heights above the changing moon:
Now I thank God for delay:—
To-day: it yet is called to-day.

While I stumble, halt and blind,
Lo He waiteth to be kind:
Bless me soon or bless me slow—
Except He bless I let not go.

Once for earth I laid my plan,
Once I leaned on strength of man:
When my hope was swept aside
I stayed my broken heart on pride:

Broken reed hath pierced my hand,
Fell my house I built on sand,
Roofless, wounded, maimed by sin,
Fightings without and fears within.

Yet, His tree, He feeds my root:
Yet, His branch, He prunes for fruit:
Yet, His sheep, these eves and morns
He seeks for me among the thorns.

With Thine Image stamped of old,
Find Thy coin more choice than gold:
Known to Thee by name, recall
To Thee Thy homesick prodigal.

Sacrifice and offering
None there is that I can bring—
None save what is Thine alone:
I bring Thee, Lord, but of Thine own.

Broken Body, Blood outpoured,
These I bring, my God, my Lord;
Wine of Life and Living Bread,
With these for me Thy board is spread.

BY THE WATERS OF BABYLON

By the waters of Babylon
We sit down and weep,
Far from the pleasant land
Where our fathers sleep:
Far from our Holy Place
From which the Glory is gone:
We sit in dust and weep
By the waters of Babylon.

By the waters of Babylon
The willow-trees grow rank:
We hang our harps thereon
Silent upon the bank.
Before us the days are dark,
And dark the days that are gone:
We grope in the very dark
By the waters of Babylon.

By the waters of Babylon,
We thirst for Jordan yet,
We pine for Jerusalem
Whereon our hearts are set:
Our priests defiled and slain,
Our princes ashamed and gone,
Oh how should we forget
By the waters of Babylon?

By the waters of Babylon
Though the wicked grind the just,
Our seed shall yet strike root
And shall shoot up from the dust:

The captive shall lead captive,
The slave rise up and begone,
And thou too shalt sit in dust,
O daughter of Babylon.

GOOD FRIDAY

Am I a stone, and not a sheep,
That I can stand, O Christ, beneath Thy cross,
To number drop by drop Thy Blood's slow loss,
And yet not weep?

Not so those women loved
Who with exceeding grief lamented Thee;
Not so fallen Peter weeping bitterly;
Not so the thief was moved;

Not so the Sun and Moon
Which hid their faces in a starless sky,
A horror of great darkness at broad noon—
I, only I.

Yet give not o'er,
But seek Thy sheep, true Shepherd of the flock;
Greater than Moses, turn and look once more
And smite a rock.

FOR A MERCY RECEIVED

THANK God who spared me what I feared !
Once more I gird myself to run.
Thy promise stands, Thou Faithful One.
Horror of darkness disappeared
At length : once more I see the sun,

And dare to wait in hope for Spring,
To face and bear the Winter's cold :
The dead cocoon shall yet unfold
And give to light the living wing :
There's hidden sap beneath the mould.

My God, how could my courage flag
So long as Thou art still the same?
For what were labour, failure, shame,
Whilst Thy sure promise doth not lag,
And Thou dost shield me with Thy Name?

Yet am I weak, my faith is weak,
My heart is weak that pleads with Thee :
O Thou that art not far to seek,
Turn to me, hearken when I speak,
Stretch forth Thy hand to succour me.

Through many perils have I past,
Deaths, plagues, and wonders, have I seen :
Till now Thy hand hath held me fast :
Lord, help me, hold me, to the last :
Still be what Thou hast always been

Open Thy Heart of Love to me,
  Give me Thyself, keep nothing back,
Even as I give myself to Thee.
  Love paid by love doth nothing lack,
  And Love to pay love is not slack.

Love doth so grace and dignify
  That beggars sue as king with king
Before the Throne of Grace on high:
My God, be gracious to my cry:
  My God, accept what gift I bring:—

A heart that loves: though soiled and bruised,
  Yet chosen by Thee in time of yore.
Who ever came and was refused
By thee? Do, Lord, as Thou art used
  To do, and make me love Thee more.

MARTYRS' SONG

We meet in joy, though we part in sorrow;
We part to-night, but we meet to-morrow.
Be it flood or blood the path that's trod,
All the same it leads home to God:
Be it furnace-fire voluminous,
One like God's Son will walk with us.

What are these that glow from afar,
These that lean over the golden bar,
Strong as the lion, pure as the dove,
With open arms and hearts of love?
They the blessed ones gone before,
They the blessed for evermore.

Out of great tribulation they went
Home to their home of Heaven-content;
Through flood or blood or furnace-fire,
To the rest that fulfils desire.

What are these that fly as a cloud,
With flashing heads and faces bowed,
In their mouths a victorious psalm,
In their hands a robe and a palm?
Welcoming angels these that shine,
Your own angel, and yours, and mine;
Who have hedged us both day and night
On the left hand and on the right,
Who have watched us both night and day
Because the devil keeps watch to slay.

Light above light, and Bliss beyond bliss,
Whom words cannot utter, lo Who is This?
As a King with many crowns He stands,
And our names are graven upon His hands:
As a Priest, with God-uplifted eyes,
He offers for us His Sacrifice;
As the Lamb of God for sinners slain,
That we too may live He lives again;
As our Champion behold Him stand,
Strong to save us, at God's Right Hand.

God the Father give us grace
To walk in the light of Jesus' Face:
God the Son give us a part
In the hiding-place of Jesus' Heart:
God the Spirit so hold us up
That we may drink of Jesus' cup.

Death is short, and life is long;
Satan is strong, but Christ more strong.
At His Word Who hath led us hither
The Red Sea must part hither and thither.
At his Word Who goes before us too
Jordan must cleave to let us through.

Yet one pang searching and sore,
And then Heaven for evermore:
Yet one moment awful and dark,
Then safety within the Veil and the Ark;
Yet one effort by Christ His grace,
Then Christ for ever face to face.

God the Father we will adore,
In Jesus' Name, now and evermore:
God the Son we will love and thank
In this flood and on the farther bank;
God the Holy Ghost we will praise,
In Jesus' Name through endless days:
God Almighty, God Three in One,
God Almighty, God alone.

THE LOWEST PLACE

Give me the lowest place; not that I dare
  Ask for that lowest place, but Thou hast died
That I might live and share
  Thy glory by Thy side.

Give me the lowest place: or if for me
  That lowest place too high, make one more low
Where I may sit and see
  My God and love Thee so.

COME UNTO ME

Oh for the time gone by when thought of Christ
Made His yoke easy and His burden light!
When my heart stirred within me at the sight
Of altar spread for awful Eucharist:
When all my hopes His promises sufficed:
When my soul watched for Him, by day, by night:
When my lamp lightened and my robe was white,
And all seemed loss except the pearl unpriced.
Yet, since He calls me still with tender call,
Since He remembers whom I half forgot,
I even will run my race and bear my lot:
For Faith the walls of Jericho cast down,
And Hope to whoso runs holds forth a crown,
And Love is Christ, and Christ is all in all.

WHO SHALL DELIVER ME?

God strengthen me to bear myself;
That heaviest weight of all to bear,
Inalienable weight of care.

All others are outside myself;
I lock my door and bar them out,
The turmoil, tedium, gad-about.

I lock my door upon myself,
And bar them out; but who shall wall
Self from myself, most loathed of all?

If I could once lay down myself,
And start self-purged upon the race
That all must run! Death runs apace.

If I could set aside myself,
And start with lightened heart upon
The road by all men overgone!

God harden me against myself,
This coward with pathetic voice
Who craves for ease, and rest, and joys:

Myself, arch-traitor to myself;
My hollowest friend, my deadliest foe,
My clog whatever road I go.

Yet One there is can curb myself,
Can roll the strangling load from me,
Break off the yoke and set me free.

IN PATIENCE

I WILL not faint, but trust in God
Who this my lot hath given:
He leads me by the thorny road
Which is the road to heaven.
Though sad my day that lasts so long,
At evening I shall have a song:
Though dim my day until the night,
At evening-time there shall be light.

My life is but a working day
Whose tasks are set aright:
A while to work, a while to pray,
And then a quiet night.
And then, please God, a quiet night
Where Saints and Angels walk in white:
One dreamless sleep from work and sorrow,
But re-awakening on the morrow.

WEARY IN WELL-DOING

I WOULD have gone ; God bade me stay :
I would have worked ; God bade me rest.
He broke my will from day to day ;
He read my yearnings unexprest,
And said them nay.

Now I would stay ; God bids me go :
Now I would rest ; God bids me work.
He breaks my heart tost to and fro ;
My soul is wrung with doubts that lurk
And vex it so.

I go, Lord, where Thou sendest me ;
Day after day I plod and moil :
But, Christ my God, when will it be
That I may let alone my toil
And rest with Thee?

BIRDS OF PARADISE

GOLDEN-WINGED, silver-winged,
Winged with flashing flame,
Such a flight of birds I saw,
Birds without a name :
Singing songs in their own tongue—
Song of songs—they came.

One to another calling,
Each answering each,
One to another calling
In their proper speech :
High above my head they wheeled,
Far out of reach.

On wings of flame they went and came
With a cadenced clang:
Their silver wings tinkled,
Their golden wings rang;
The wind it whistled through their wings
Where in heaven they sang.

They flashed and they darted
Awhile before mine eyes,
Mounting, mounting, mounting still,
In haste to scale the skies,
Birds without a nest on earth,
Birds of Paradise.

Where the moon riseth not
Nor sun seeks the west,
There to sing their glory
Which they sing at rest,
There to sing their love-song
When they sing their best:—

Not in any garden
That mortal foot hath trod,
Not in any flowering tree
That springs from earthly sod,
But in the garden where they dwell
The Paradise of God.

DOST THOU NOT CARE?

'I LOVE and love not: Lord, it breaks my heart
To love and not to love.
Thou veiled within Thy glory, gone apart
Into Thy shrine which is above,
Dost Thou not love me, Lord, or care
For this mine ill?'—
'I love thee here or there,
I will accept thy broken heart—lie still.'

'Lord, it was well with me in time gone by
That cometh not again,
When I was fresh and cheerful, who but I?
I fresh, I cheerful: worn with pain
Now, out of sight and out of heart;
O Lord, how long?'—
'I watch thee as thou art,
I will accept thy fainting heart—be strong.'

'Lie still, be strong, to-day: but, Lord, to-morrow,
What of to-morrow, Lord?
Shall there be rest from toil, be truce from sorrow,
Be living green upon the sward,
Now but a barren grave to me,
Be joy for sorrow?'—
'Did I not die for thee?
Do I not live for thee? Leave Me to-morrow.'

IF ONLY

If only I might love my God and die !—
  But now He bids me love Him and live on,
  Now when the bloom of all my life is gone,
The pleasant half of life has quite gone by.
My tree of hope is lopt that spread so high ;
  And I forget how summer glowed and shone,
  While autumn grips me with its fingers wan,
And frets me with its fitful windy sigh.
When autumn passes then must winter numb,
  And winter may not pass a weary while.
    But when it passes spring shall flower again :
And in that spring who weepeth now shall smile—
    Yea, they shall wax who now are on the wane,
Yea, they shall sing for love when Christ shall come.

LONG BARREN

Thou who didst hang upon a barren tree,
My God, for me ;
  Though I till now be barren, now at length,
  Lord, give me strength
To bring forth fruit to Thee.

Thou who didst bear for me the crown of thorn,
Spitting and scorn ;
  Though I till now have put forth thorns, yet now
  Strengthen me Thou
That better fruit be borne.

Thou Rose of Sharon, Cedar of broad roots,
Vine of sweet fruits,
  Thou Lily of the vale with fadeless leaf,
  Of thousands Chief,
Feed Thou my feeble shoots.

MOTHER COUNTRY

Oh what is that country
  And where can it be,
Not mine own country,
  But dearer far to me?
Yet mine own country,
  If I one day may see
Its spices and cedars,
  Its gold and ivory.

As I lie dreaming,
  It rises, that land;
There rises before me
  Its green golden strand,
With the bowing cedars
  And the shining sand;
It sparkles and flashes
  Like a shaken brand.

Do angels lean nearer
  While I lie and long?
I see their soft plumage
  And catch their windy song,
Like the rise of a high tide
  Sweeping full and strong;
I mark the outskirts
  Of their reverend throng.

Oh what is a king here,
Or what is a boor?
Here all starve together,
All dwarfed and poor;
Here Death's hand knocketh
At door after door,
He thins the dancers
From the festal floor.

Oh what is a handmaid,
Or what is a queen?
All must lie down together
Where the turf is green,
The foulest face hidden,
The fairest not seen;
Gone as if never
They had breathed or been.

Gone from sweet sunshine
Underneath the sod,
Turned from warm flesh and blood
To senseless clod,
Gone as if never
They had toiled or trod,
Gone out of sight of all
Except our God.

Shut into silence
From the accustomed song,
Shut into solitude
From all earth's throng,
Run down though swift of foot,
Thrust down though strong:
Life made an end of,
Seemed it short or long.

Life made an end of,—
  Life but just begun;
Life finished yesterday,
  Its last sand run;
Life new-born with the morrow,
  Fresh as the sun:
While done is done for ever;
  Undone, undone.

And if that life is life,
  This is but a breath,
The passage of a dream
  And the shadow of death;
But a vain shadow
  If one considereth;
Vanity of vanities,
  As the Preacher saith.

AFTER COMMUNION

Why should I call Thee Lord, Who art my God?
  Why should I call Thee Friend, Who art my Love?
  Or King, Who art my very Spouse above?
Or call Thy sceptre on my heart Thy rod?
  Lo now Thy banner over me is love,
All heaven flies open to me at Thy nod:
For Thou hast lit Thy flame in me a clod,
  Made me a nest for dwelling of Thy Dove.
  What wilt Thou call me in our home above,
Who now hast called me friend? how will it be
    When Thou for good wine settest forth the best?
Now Thou dost bid me come and sup with Thee,
    Now Thou dost make me lean upon Thy breast:
  How will it be with me in time of love?

THEY DESIRE A BETTER COUNTRY

I

I WOULD not if I could undo my past,
  Tho' for its sake my future is a blank;
  My past for which I have myself to thank,
For all its faults and follies first and last.
I would not cast anew the lot once cast,
  Or launch a second ship for one that sank,
  Or drug with sweets the bitterness I drank,
Or break by feasting my perpetual fast.
I would not if I could: for much more dear
  Is one remembrance than a hundred joys,
    More than a thousand hopes in jubilee;
  Dearer the music of one tearful voice
    That unforgotten calls and calls to me,
'Follow Me here, rise up, and follow here.'

II

What seekest thou, far in the unknown land?
  In hope I follow joy gone on before;
  In hope and fear persistent more and more
As the dry desert lengthens out its sand;
Whilst day and night I carry in my hand
  The golden key to ope the golden door
  Of golden home; yet mine eye weepeth sore,
For long the journey is that makes no stand.
And who is this that veiled doth walk with thee?
  Lo this is Love that walketh at my right;
    One exile holds us both, and we are bound
  To selfsame home-joys in the land of light.
Weeping thou walkest with him; weepeth he?—
    Some sobbing weep, some weep and make no sound.

III

A dimness of a glory glimmers here
  Thro' veils and distance from the space remote ;
  A faintest far vibration of a note
Reaches to us and seems to bring us near ;
Causing our face to glow with braver cheer,
  Making the serried mist to stand afloat,
  Subduing languor with an antidote,
And strengthening love almost to cast out fear :
Till for one moment golden city walls
  Rise looming on us, golden walls of home,
Light of our eyes until the darkness falls ;
  Then thro' the outer darkness burdensome
I hear again the tender voice that calls,
  'Follow Me hither, follow, rise, and come.'

A CHRISTMAS CAROL

In the bleak mid-winter
  Frosty wind made moan,
Earth stood hard as iron,
  Water like a stone ;
Snow had fallen, snow on snow,
  Snow on snow,
In the bleak mid-winter
  Long ago.

Our God, Heaven cannot hold Him
  Nor earth sustain ;
Heaven and earth shall flee away
  When He comes to reign :

In the bleak mid-winter
  A stable-place sufficed
The Lord God Almighty
  Jesus Christ.

Enough for Him, whom cherubim
  Worship night and day,
A breastful of milk
  And a mangerful of hay ;
Enough for Him, whom angels
  Fall down before,
The ox and ass and camel
  Which adore.

Angels and archangels
  May have gathered there,
Cherubim and seraphim
  Thronged the air ;
But only His mother
  In her maiden bliss
Worshipped the Beloved
  With a kiss.

What can I give Him,
  Poor as I am ?
If I were a shepherd
  I would bring a lamb,
If I were a Wise Man
  I would do my part,—
Yet what I can I give Him,
  Give my heart.

THE MASTER IS COME, AND CALLETH FOR THEE

WHO calleth?—Thy Father calleth,
Run, O Daughter, to wait on Him:
He Who chasteneth but for a season
Trims thy lamp that it burn not dim.

Who calleth?—Thy Master calleth,
Sit, Disciple, and learn of Him:
He Who teacheth wisdom of Angels
Makes thee wise as the Cherubim.

Who calleth?—Thy Monarch calleth,
Rise, O Subject, and follow Him:
He is stronger than Death or Devil,
Fear not thou if the foe be grim.

Who calleth?—Thy Lord God calleth,
Fall, O Creature, adoring Him:
He is jealous, thy God Almighty,
Count not dear to thee life or limb.

Who calleth?—Thy Bridegroom calleth,
Soar, O Bride, with the Seraphim:
He Who loves thee as no man loveth
Bids thee give up thy heart to Him.

'WHEN MY HEART IS VEXED I WILL COMPLAIN'

'O Lord, how canst Thou say Thou lovest me—
Me whom thou settest in a barren land,
Hungry and thirsty on the burning sand,
Hungry and thirsty where no waters be
Nor shadows of date-bearing tree:—
O Lord, how canst Thou say Thou lovest me?'

'I came from Edom by as parched a track,
As rough a track beneath My bleeding feet.
I came from Edom seeking thee, and sweet
I counted bitterness; I turned not back
But counted life as death, and trod
The winepress all alone: and I am God.'

'Yet, Lord, how canst Thou say Thou lovest me?
For Thou art strong to comfort: and could I
But comfort one I love who, like to die,
Lifts feeble hands and eyes that fail to see
In one last prayer for comfort—nay,
I could not stand aside or turn away.'

'Alas thou knowest that for thee I died,
For thee I thirsted with the dying thirst;
I, blessèd, for thy sake was counted curst,
In sight of men and angels crucified:
All this and more I bore to prove
My love, and wilt thou yet mistrust My love?'

'Lord, I am fain to think Thou lovest me,
For Thou art all in all and I am Thine;
And lo Thy love is better than new wine,

And I am sick of love in loving Thee.
But dost Thou love me? Speak and save,
For jealousy is cruel as the grave.'

'Nay, if thy love is not an empty breath,
My love is as thine own—deep answers deep.
Peace, peace: I give to My beloved sleep—
Not death but sleep, for love is strong as death.
Take patience: sweet thy sleep shall be:
Yea thou shalt wake in Paradise with Me.'

SAINTS AND ANGELS

It's oh in Paradise that I fain would be,
Away from earth and weariness and all beside:
Earth is too full of loss with its dividing sea,
But Paradise upbuilds the bower for the bride.

Where flowers are yet in bud while the boughs are green,
I would get quit of earth and get robed for heaven;
Putting on my raiment white within the screen,
Putting on my crown of gold whose gems are seven.

Fair is the fourfold river that maketh no moan,
Fair are the trees fruit-bearing of the wood,
Fair are the gold and bdellium and the onyx stone,
And I know the gold of that land is good.

O my love, my dove, lift up your eyes
Toward the eastern gate like an opening rose;
You and I who parted will meet in Paradise,
Pass within and sing when the gates unclose.

This life is but the passage of a day,
  This life is but a pang and all is over,
But in the life to come which fades not away
  Every love shall abide and every lover.

He who wore out pleasure and mastered all lore,
  Solomon wrote 'Vanity of vanities':
Down to death, of all that went before
  In his mighty long life, the record is this.

With loves by the hundred, wealth beyond measure,
  Is this he who wrote 'Vanity of vanities'?
Yea, 'Vanity of vanities' he saith of pleasure,
  And of all he learned set his seal to this.

Yet we love and faint not, for our love is one,
  And we hope and flag not, for our hope is sure;
Although there be nothing new beneath the sun,
  And no help for life and for death no cure.

The road to death is life, the gate of life is death,
  We who wake shall sleep, we shall wax who wane;
Let us not vex our souls for stoppage of a breath,
  The fall of a river that turneth not again.

Be the road short, and be the gate near,—
  Shall a short road tire, a strait gate appall?
The loves that meet in Paradise shall cast out fear,
  And Paradise hath room for you and me and all.

A ROSE PLANT IN JERICHO

At morn I plucked a rose and gave it Thee,
A rose of joy and happy love and peace,
A rose with scarce a thorn:
But in the chillness of a second morn
My rose bush drooped, and all its gay increase
Was but one thorn that wounded me.

I plucked the thorn and offered it to Thee,
And for my thorn Thou gavest love and peace,
Not joy this mortal morn:
If Thou hast given much treasure for a thorn,
Wilt Thou not give me for my rose increase
Of gladness, and all sweets to me?

My thorny rose, my love and pain, to Thee
I offer; and I set my heart in peace,
And rest upon my thorn:
For verily I think to-morrow morn
Shall give me Paradise, my gift's increase,
Yea, give Thy very Self to me.

A BALLAD OF BODING

THERE are sleeping dreams and waking dreams ;
What seems is not always as it seems.

I looked out of my window in the sweet new morning,
And there I saw three barges of manifold adorning
Went sailing toward the East :
The first had sails like fire,
The next like glittering wire,
But sackcloth were the sails of the least ;
And all the crews made music, and two had spread a feast.

The first choir breathed in flutes,
And fingered soft guitars ;
The second won from lutes
Harmonious chords and jars,
With drums for stormy bars :
But the third was all of harpers and scarlet trumpeters ;
Notes of triumph, then
An alarm again,
As for onset, as for victory, rallies, stirs,
Peace at last and glory to the vanquishers

The first barge showed for figurehead a Love with wings ;
The second showed for figurehead a Worm with stings ;
The third, a Lily tangled to a Rose which clings.
The first bore for freight gold and spice and down ;
The second bore a sword, a sceptre, and a crown ;
The third, a heap of earth gone to dust and brown.
Winged Love meseemed like Folly in the face ;
Stinged Worm meseemed loathly in his place ;
Lily and Rose were flowers of grace.

Merry went the revel of the fire-sailed crew,
Singing, feasting, dancing to and fro:
Pleasures ever changing, ever graceful, ever new;
Sighs, but scarce of woe;
All the sighing
Wooed such sweet replying;
All the sighing, sweet and low,
Used to come and go
For more pleasure, merely so.
Yet at intervals some one grew tired
Of everything desired,
And sank, I knew not whither, in sorry plight,
Out of sight.

The second crew seemed ever
Wider-visioned, graver,
More distinct of purpose, more sustained of will;
With heads erect and proud,
And voices sometimes loud;
With endless tacking, counter-tacking,
All things grasping, all things lacking,
It would seem;
Ever shifting helm, or sail, or shroud,
Drifting on as in a dream,
Hoarding to their utmost bent
Feasting to their fill,
Yet gnawed by discontent,
Envy, hatred, malice, on their road they went.
Their freight was not a treasure,
Their music not a pleasure;
The sword flashed, cleaving through their bands,
Sceptre and crown changed hands.

The third crew as they went
Seemed mostly different;
They toiled in rowing, for to them the wind was contrary,
As all the world might see.
They laboured at the oar,
While on their heads they bore
The fiery stress of sunshine more and more.
They laboured at the oar handsore,
Till rain went splashing,
And spray went dashing,
Down on them, and up on them, more and more.
Their sails were patched and rent,
Their masts were bent,
In peril of their lives they worked and went.
For them no feast was spread,
No soft luxurious bed
Scented and white,
No crown or sceptre hung in sight;
In weariness and painfulness,
In thirst and sore distress,
They rowed and steered from left to right
With all their might.

Their trumpeters and harpers round about
Incessantly played out,
And sometimes they made answer with a shout;
But oftener they groaned or wept,
And seldom paused to eat, and seldom slept.
I wept for pity watching them, but more
I wept heart-sore
Once and again to see
Some weary man plunge overboard, and swim
To Love or Worm ship floating buoyantly:
And there all welcomed him.

The ships steered each apart and seemed to scorn each other,
Yet all the crews were interchangeable ;
Now one man, now another,—
Like bloodless spectres some, some flushed by health,—
Changed openly, or changed by stealth,
Scaling a slippery side, and scaled it well.
The most left Love ship, hauling wealth
Up Worm ship's side ;
While some few hollow-eyed
Left either for the sack-sailed boat ;
But this, though not remote,
Was worst to mount, and whoso left it once
Scarce ever came again,
But seemed to loathe his erst companions,
And wish and work them bane.

Then I knew (I know not how) there lurked quicksands full of dread,
Rocks and reefs and whirlpools in the water bed,
Whence a waterspout
Instantaneously leaped out,
Roaring as it reared its head.
Soon I spied a something dim
Many-handed, grim,
That went flitting to and fro the first and second ship ;
It puffed their sails full out
With puffs of smoky breath
From a smouldering lip,
And cleared the waterspout
Which reeled roaring round about
Threatening death.

With a horny hand it steered,
And a horn appeared
On its sneering head upreared
Haughty and high
Against the blackening lowering sky.
With a hoof it swayed the waves;
They opened here and there,
Till I spied deep open graves
Full of skeletons
That were men and women once
Foul or fair;
Full of things that creep
And fester in the deep
And never breathe the clean life-nurturing air.

The third bark held aloof
From the Monster with the hoof,
Despite his urgent beck,
And fraught with guile
Abominable his smile;
Till I saw him take a flying leap on to that deck.
Then full of awe,
With these same eyes I saw
His head incredible retract its horn
Rounding like babe's new born,
While silvery phosphorescence played
About his dis-horned head.
The sneer smoothed from his lip,
He beamed blandly on the ship;
All winds sank to a moan,
All waves to a monotone
(For all these seemed his realm),
While he laid a strong caressing hand upon the helm.

Then a cry well nigh of despair
Shrieked to heaven, a clamour of desperate prayer.
The harpers harped no more,
While the trumpeters sounded sore,
An alarm to wake the dead from their bed :
To the rescue, to the rescue, now or never,
To the rescue, O ye living, O ye dead,
Or no more help or hope for ever !—
The planks strained as though they must part asunder,
The masts bent as though they must dip under,
And the winds and the waves at length
Girt up their strength,
And the depths were laid bare,
And heaven flashed fire and volleyed thunder
Through the rain-choked air,
And sea and sky seemed to kiss
In the horror and the hiss
Of the whole world shuddering everywhere.

Lo ! a Flyer swooping down
With wings to span the globe,
And splendour for his robe
And splendour for his crown.
He lighted on the helm with a foot of fire,
And spun the Monster overboard :
And that montrous thing abhorred,
Gnashing with balked desire,
Wriggled like a worm infirm
Up the Worm
Of the loathly figurehead.
There he crouched and gnashed ;
And his head re-horned, and gashed
From the other's grapple, dripped bloody red.

I saw that thing accurst
Wreak his worst

On the first and second crew :
Some with baited hook
He angled for and took,
Some dragged overboard in a net he threw ;
Some he did to death
With hoof or horn or blasting breath.

I heard a voice of wailing
Where the ships went sailing,
A sorrowful voice prevailing
Above the sound of the sea,
Above the singers' voices,
And musical merry noises ;
All songs had turned to sighing,
The light was failing,
The day was dying—
Ah me
That such a sorrow should be !

There was sorrow on the sea and sorrow on the land
When Love ship went down by the bottomless quicksand
To its grave in the bitter wave.
There was sorrow on the sea and sorrow on the land
When Worm ship went to pieces on the rock-bound strand,
And the bitter wave was its grave.
But land and sea waxed hoary
In whiteness of a glory
Never told in story
Nor seen by mortal eye,
When the third ship crossed the bar
Where whirls and breakers are,
And steered into the splendours of the sky ;
That third bark and that least
Which had never seemed to feast,
Yet kept high festival above sun and moon and star.

AN OLD-WORLD THICKET

'Una selva oscura.'—DANTE.

AWAKE or sleeping (for I know not which)
I was or was not mazed within a wood
Where every mother-bird brought up her brood
Safe in some leafy niche
Of oak or ash, of cypress or of beech,

Of silvery aspen trembling delicately,
Of plane or warmer-tinted sycomore,
Of elm that dies in secret from the core,
Of ivy weak and free,
Of pines, of all green lofty things that be.

Such birds they seemed as challenged each desire;
Like spots of azure heaven upon the wing,
Like downy emeralds that alight and sing,
Like actual coals on fire,
Like anything they seemed, and everything.

Such mirth they made, such warblings and such chat,
With tongue of music in a well-tuned beak,
They seemed to speak more wisdom than we speak,
To make our music flat
And all our subtlest reasonings wild or weak.

Their meat was nought but flowers like butterflies,
With berries coral-coloured or like gold;
Their drink was only dew, which blossoms hold
Deep where the honey lies;
Their wings and tails were lit by sparkling eyes.

The shade wherein they revelled was a shade
That danced and twinkled to the unseen sun ;
Branches and leaves cast shadows one by one,
And all their shadows swayed
In breaths of air that rustled and that played.

A sound of waters neither rose nor sank,
And spread a sense of freshness through the air ;
It seemed not here or there, but everywhere,
As if the whole earth drank,
Root fathom-deep and strawberry on its bank.

But I who saw such things as I have said
Was overdone with utter weariness ;
And walked in care, as one whom fears oppress
Because above his head
Death hangs, or damage, or the dearth of bread.

Each sore defeat of my defeated life
Faced and outfaced me in that bitter hour ;
And turned to yearning palsy all my power,
And all my peace to strife,
Self stabbing self with keen lack-pity knife.

Sweetness of beauty moved me to despair,
Stung me to anger by its mere content,
Made me all lonely on that way I went,
Piled care upon my care,
Brimmed full my cup, and stripped me empty and bare :

For all that was but showed what all was not,
But gave clear proof of what might never be ;
Making more destitute my poverty,
And yet more blank my lot,
And me much sadder by its jubilee.

Therefore I sat me down : for wherefore walk?
And closed mine eyes : for wherefore see or hear?
Alas, I had no shutter to mine ear,
And could not shun the talk
Of all rejoicing creatures far or near.

Without my will I hearkened and I heard
(Asleep or waking, for I know not which),
Till note by note the music changed its pitch ;
Bird ceased to answer bird,
And every wind sighed softly if it stirred.

The drip of widening waters seemed to weep,
All fountains sobbed and gurgled as they sprang,
Somewhere a cataract cried out in its leap
Sheer down a headlong steep ;
High over all cloud-thunders gave a clang.

Such universal sound of lamentation
I heard and felt, fain not to feel or hear ;
Nought else there seemed but anguish far and near ;
Nought else but all creation
Moaning and groaning wrung by pain or fear,

Shuddering in the misery of its doom :
My heart then rose a rebel against light,
Scouring all earth and heaven and depth and height,
Ingathering wrath and gloom,
Ingathering wrath to wrath and night to night.

Ah me, the bitterness of such revolt,
All impotent, all hateful, and all hate,
That kicks and breaks itself against the bolt
Of an imprisoning fate,
And vainly shakes, and cannot shake the gate.

Agony to agony, deep called to deep,
Out of the deep I called of my desire;
My strength was weakness and my heart was fire;
Mine eyes, that would not weep
Or sleep, scaled height and depth, and could not sleep;

The eyes, I mean, of my rebellious soul,
For still my bodily eyes were closed and dark:
A random thing I seemed without a mark,
Racing without a goal,
Adrift upon life's sea without an ark.

More leaden than the actual self of lead,
Outer and inner darkness weighed on me.
The tide of anger ebbed. Then fierce and free
Surged full above my head
The moaning tide of helpless misery.

Why should I breathe, whose breath was but a sigh?
Why should I live, who drew such painful breath?
Oh weary work, the unanswerable why!—
Yet I, why should I die,
Who had no hope in life, no hope in death?

Grasses and mosses and the fallen leaf
Make peaceful bed for an indefinite term;
But underneath the grass there gnaws a worm—
Haply, there gnaws a grief—
Both, haply always; not, as now, so brief.

The pleasure I remember, it is past;
The pain I feel is passing, passing by;
Thus all the world is passing, and thus I:
All things that cannot last
Have grown familiar, and are born to die.

And being familiar, have so long been borne
That habit trains us not to break but bend:
Mourning grows natural to us who mourn
In foresight of an end,
But that which ends not who shall brave or mend?

Surely the ripe fruits tremble on their bough,
They cling and linger trembling till they drop:
I, trembling, cling to dying life; for how
Face the perpetual Now?
Birthless and deathless, void of start or stop,

Void of repentance, void of hope and fear,
Of possibility, alternative,
Of all that ever made us bear to live
From night to morning here,
Of promise even which has no gift to give.

The wood, and every creature of the wood,
Seemed mourning with me in an undertone;
Soft scattered chirpings and a windy moan,
Trees rustling, where they stood
And shivered, showed compassion for my mood.

Rage to despair: and now despair had turned
Back to self-pity and mere weariness,
With yearnings like a smouldering fire that burned,
And might grow more or less,
And might die out or wax to white excess.

Without, within me, music seemed to be;
Something not music, yet most musical,
Silence and sound in heavenly harmony;
At length a pattering fall
Of feet, a bell, and bleatings, broke through all.

Then I looked up. The wood lay in a glow
From golden sunset and from ruddy sky ;
The sun had stooped to earth though once so high ;
Had stooped to earth, in slow
Warm dying loveliness brought near and low.

Each water drop made answer to the light,
Lit up a spark and showed the sun his face ;
Soft purple shadows paved the grassy space
And crept from height to height,
From height to loftier height crept up apace.

While opposite the sun a gazing moon
Put on his glory for her coronet,
Kindling her luminous coldness to its noon,
As his great splendour set ;
One only star made up her train as yet.

Each twig was tipped with gold, each leaf was edged
And veined with gold from the gold-flooded west ;
Each mother-bird, and mate-bird, and unfledged
Nestling, and curious nest,
Displayed a gilded moss or beak or breast.

And filing peacefully between the trees,
Having the moon behind them, and the sun
Full in their meek mild faces, walked at ease
A homeward flock, at peace
With one another and with every one.

A patriarchal ram with tinkling bell
Led all his kin ; sometimes one browsing sheep
Hung back a moment, or one lamb would leap
And frolic in a dell ;
Yet still they kept together, journeying well,

And bleating, one or others, many or few,
Journeying together toward the sunlit west ;
Mild face by face, and woolly breast by breast,
Patient, sun-brightened too,
Still journeying toward the sunset and their rest.

FOR THINE OWN SAKE, O MY GOD

Wearied of sinning, wearied of repentance,
Wearied of self, I turn, my God, to Thee ;
To Thee, my Judge, on Whose all-righteous sentence
Hangs mine eternity :
I turn to Thee, I plead Thyself with Thee,—
Be pitiful to me.

Wearied I loathe myself, I loathe my sinning,
My stains, my festering sores, my misery :
Thou the Beginning, Thou ere my beginning
Didst see and didst foresee
Me miserable, me sinful, ruined me,—
I plead Thyself with Thee.

I plead Thyself with Thee Who art my Maker,
Regard Thy handiwork that cries to Thee ;
I plead Thyself with Thee Who wast partaker
Of mine infirmity ;
Love made Thee what Thou art, the love of me,—
I plead Thyself with Thee.

'OF HIM THAT WAS READY TO PERISH'

LORD, I am waiting, weeping, watching for Thee:
My youth and hope lie by me buried and dead,
My wandering love hath not where to lay its head
Except Thou say 'Come to Me.'

My noon is ended, abolished from life and light,
My noon is ended, ended and done away,
My sun went down in the hours that still were day,
And my lingering day is night.

How long, O Lord, how long in my desperate pain
Shall I weep and watch, shall I weep and long for Thee?
Is Thy grace ended, Thy love cut off from me?
How long shall I long in vain?

O God Who before the beginning hast seen the end,
Who hast made me flesh and blood, not frost and not fire,
Who hast filled me full of needs and love and desire
And a heart that craves a friend,—

Who hast said 'Come to Me and I will give thee rest,'
Who hast said 'Take on thee My yoke and learn of Me,'
Who calledst a little child to come to Thee,
And pillowedst John on Thy breast;

Who spak'st to women that followed Thee sorrowing,
Bidding them weep for themselves and weep for their own;
Who didst welcome the outlaw adoring Thee all alone,
And plight Thy word as a King,—

By Thy love of these and of all that ever shall be,
By Thy love of these and of all the born and unborn,
Turn Thy gracious eyes on me and think no scorn
Of me, not even of me.

Beside Thy Cross I hang on my cross in shame,
My wounds, weakness, extremity cry to Thee:
Bid me also to Paradise, also me,
For the glory of Thy Name.

THE DESCENT FROM THE CROSS

Is this the Face that thrills with awe
Seraphs who veil their face above?
Is this the Face without a flaw,
The Face that is the Face of Love?
Yea, this defaced, a lifeless clod,
Hath all creation's love sufficed,
Hath satisfied the love of God,
This Face the Face of Jesus Christ.

'TAKE CARE OF HIM'

'THOU whom I love, for whom I died,
Lovest thou Me, My bride?'—
Low on my knees I love Thee, Lord,
Believed in and adored.

'That I love thee the proof is plain:
How dost thou love again?'—
In prayer, in toil, in earthly loss,
In a long-carried cross.

'Yea, thou dost love: yet one adept
Brings more for Me to accept.'—
I mould my will to match with Thine,
My wishes I resign.

'Thou givest much: then give the whole
For solace of My soul.'—
More would I give, if I could get:
But, Lord, what lack I yet?

'In Me thou lovest Me: I call
Thee to love Me in all.'—
Brim full my heart, dear Lord, that so
My love may overflow.

'Love me in sinners and in saints,
In each who needs or faints.'—
Lord, I will love Thee as I can
In every brother man.

'All sore, all crippled, all who ache,
Tend all for My dear sake.'—
All for Thy sake, Lord: I will see
In every sufferer Thee.

So I at last, upon My Throne
Of glory, Judge alone,
So I at last will say to thee:
Thou diddest it to Me.'

A MARTYR

THE VIGIL OF THE FEAST

Inner not outer, without gnash of teeth
  Or weeping, save quiet sobs of some who pray
  And feel the Everlasting Arms beneath,—
Blackness of darkness this, but not for aye;
  Darkness that even in gathering fleeteth fast,
  Blackness of blackest darkness close to day.
Lord Jesus, through Thy darkened pillar cast
  Thy gracious eyes all-seeing cast on me
  Until this tyranny be overpast.
Me, Lord, remember who remember Thee,
  And cleave to Thee, and see Thee without sight,
  And choose Thee still in dire extremity,
And in this darkness worship Thee my Light,
  And Thee my Life adore in shadow of death,
  Thee loved by day, and still beloved by night.
It is the Voice of my Beloved that saith:
  'I am the Way, the Truth, the Life, I go
  Whither that soul knows well that followeth.'
O Lord, I follow, little as I know;
  At this eleventh hour I rise and take
  My life into my hand, and follow so,
With tears and heart-misgivings and heart-ache;
  Thy feeblest follower, yet Thy follower
  Indomitable for Thine only sake.
To-night I gird my will afresh, and stir
  My strength, and brace my heart to do and dare,—
  Marvelling: Will to-morrow wake the whirr
Of the great rending wheel, or from his lair
  Startle the jubilant lion in his rage,

Or clench the headsman's hand within my hair,
Or kindle fire to speed my pilgrimage,
Chariot of fire and horses of sheer fire
Whirling me home to heaven by one fierce stage?—
Thy Will I will, I Thy desire desire;
Let not the waters close above my head,
Uphold me that I sink not in this mire:
For flesh and blood are frail and sore afraid;
And young I am, unsatisfied and young,
With memories, hopes, with cravings all unfed,
My song half sung, its sweetest notes unsung,
All plans cut short, all possibilities,
Because my cord of life is soon unstrung.
Was I a careless woman set at ease
That this so bitter cup is brimmed for me?
Had mine own vintage settled on the lees?
A word, a puff of smoke, would set me free;
A word, a puff of smoke, over and gone: . . .
Howbeit, whom have I, Lord, in heaven but Thee?
Yea, only Thee my choice is fixed upon
In heaven or earth, eternity or time:—
Lord, hold me fast, Lord, leave me not alone,
Thy silly heartless dove that sees the lime
Yet almost flutters to the tempting bough:
Cover me, hide me, pluck me from this crime.
A word, a puff of smoke, would save me now: . . .
But who, my God, would save me in the day
Of Thy fierce anger? only Saviour Thou.
Preoccupy my heart, and turn away
And cover up mine eyes from frantic fear,
And stop mine ears lest I be driven astray:
For one stands ever dinning in mine ear
How my grey Father withers in the blight
Of love for me, who cruel am and dear;
And how my Mother through this lingering night

Until the day sits tearless in her woe,
Loathing for love of me the happy light
Which brings to pass a concourse and a show
To glut the hungry faces merciless;
The thousand faces swaying to and fro,
Feasting on me unveiled in helplessness,
Alone,—yet not alone: Lord, stand by me
As once by lonely Paul in his distress.
As blossoms to the sun I turn to Thee;
Thy dove turns to her window, think no scorn;
As one dove to an ark on shoreless sea,
To Thee I turn mine eyes, my heart forlorn.
Put forth Thy scarred right Hand, kind Lord, take hold
Of me Thine all-forsaken dove who mourn:
For Thou hast loved me since the days of old,
And I love Thee Whom loving I will love
Through life's short fever-fits of heat and cold;
Thy Name will I extol and sing thereof,
Will flee for refuge to Thy Blessed Name.
Lord, look upon me from Thy bliss above:
Look down on me, who shrink from all the shame
And pangs and desolation of my death,
Wrenched piecemeal or devoured or set on flame,
While all the world around me holds its breath
With eyes glued on me for a gazing-stock,
Pitiless eyes, while no man pitieth.
The floods are risen, I stagger in their shock,
My heart reels and is faint, I fail, I faint:
My God, set Thou me up upon the rock,
Thou Who didst long ago Thyself acquaint
With death, our death; Thou Who didst long ago
Pour forth Thy soul for sinner and for saint.
Bear me in mind, whom no one else will know;
Thou whom Thy friends forsook, take Thou my part,
Of all forsaken in mine overthrow;

Carry me in Thy bosom, in Thy heart
Carry me out of darkness into light,
To-morrow make me see Thee as Thou art.
Lover and friend Thou hidest from my sight.
Alas, alas, mine earthly love, alas,
For whom I thought to don the garments white
And white wreath of a bride, this rugged pass
Hath utterly divorced me from thy care.
Yea, I am to thee as a shattered glass
Worthless, with no more beauty lodging there,
Abhorred, lest I involve thee in my doom:
For sweet are sunshine and this upper air,
And life and youth are sweet, and give us room
For all most sweetest sweetnesses we taste:
Dear, what hast thou in common with a tomb?
I bow my head in silence, I make haste
Alone, I make haste out into the dark,
My life and youth and hope all run to waste.
Is this my body cold and stiff and stark,
Ashes made ashes, earth becoming earth,
Is this a prize for man to make his mark?
Am I that very I who laughed in mirth
A while ago, a little little while,
Yet all the while a-dying since my birth?
Now am I tired, too tired to strive or smile;
I sit alone, my mouth is in the dust:
Look Thou upon me, Lord, for I am vile.
In Thee is all my hope, is all my trust,
On Thee I centre all my self that dies,
And self that dies not with its mortal crust,
But sleeps and wakes, and in the end will rise
With hymns and hallelujahs on its lips,
Thee loving with the love that satisfies.
As once in Thine unutterable eclipse
The sun and moon grew dark for sympathy,

And earth cowered quaking underneath the drips
Of Thy slow Blood priceless exceedingly,
So now a little spare me, and show forth
Some pity, O my God, some pity of me.
If trouble comes not from the south or north,
But meted to us by Thy tender hand,
Let me not in Thine eyes be nothing worth:
Behold me where in agony I stand,
Behold me no man caring for my soul,
And take me to Thee in the far-off land,
Shorten the race and lift me to the goal.

THE THREAD OF LIFE

I

THE irresponsive silence of the land,
The irresponsive sounding of the sea,
Speak both one message of one sense to me:—
Aloof, aloof, we stand aloof; so stand
Thou too aloof bound with the flawless band
Of inner solitude; we bind not thee;
But who from thy self-chain shall set thee free?
What heart shall touch thy heart? what hand thy hand?'—
And I am sometimes proud and sometimes meek,
And sometimes I remember days of old
When fellowship seemed not so far to seek
And all the world and I seemed much less cold,
And at the rainbow's foot lay surely gold,
And hope felt strong and life itself not weak.

2

Thus am I mine own prison. Everything
  Around me free and sunny and at ease :
  Or if in shadow, in a shade of trees
Which the sun kisses, where the gay birds sing
And where all winds make various murmuring ;
  Where bees are found, with honey for the bees ;
  Where sounds are music, and where silences
Are music of an unlike fashioning.
Then gaze I at the merrymaking crew,
  And smile a moment and a moment sigh,
Thinking, Why can I not rejoice with you ?
  But soon I put the foolish fancy by :
I am not what I have nor what I do ;
  But what I was I am, I am even I.

3

Therefore myself is that one only thing
  I hold to use or waste, to keep or give ;
  My sole possession every day I live,
And still mine own despite Time's winnowing.
Ever mine own, while moons and seasons bring
  From crudeness ripeness mellow and sanative ;
  Ever mine own, till Death shall ply his sieve ;
And still mine own, when saints break grave and sing.
And this myself as king unto my King
  I give, to Him Who gave Himself for me ;
Who gives Himself to me, and bids me sing
  A sweet new song of His redeemed set free ;
He bids me sing, O Death, where is thy sting ?
  And sing, O grave, where is thy victory ?

CHRISTMAS CAROL

Lo ! newborn Jesus
Soft and weak and small,
Wrapped in baby's bands
By His Mother's hands,
Lord God of all.

Lord God of Mary,
Whom His Lips caress
While He rocks to rest
On her milky breast
In helplessness.

Lord God of shepherds
Flocking through the cold,
Flocking through the dark
To the only Ark,
The only Fold.

Lord God of all things
Be they near or far,
Be they high or low;
Lord of storm and snow,
Angel and star.

Lord God of all men,—
My Lord and my God !
Thou who lovest me,
Keep me close to Thee
By staff and rod.

Lo ! newborn Jesus
Loving great and small,
Love's free Sacrifice,
Opening Arms and Eyes
To one and all.

A HOPE CAROL

A NIGHT was near, a day was near:
Between a day and night
I heard sweet voices calling clear,
Calling me:
I heard a whirr of wing on wing,
But could not see the sight;
I long to see the birds that sing,
I long to see.

Below the stars, beyond the moon,
Between the night and day,
I heard a rising falling tune
Calling me:
I long to see the pipes and strings
Whereon such minstrels play;
I long to see each face that sings,
I long to see.

To-day or may be not to-day,
To-night or not to-night,
All voices that command or pray,
Calling me,
Shall kindle in my soul such fire
And in my eyes such light
That I shall see that heart's desire
I long to see.

YEA I HAVE A GOODLY HERITAGE

My vineyard that is mine I have to keep,
Pruning for fruit the pleasant twigs and leaves.
Tend thou thy cornfield: one day thou shalt reap
In joy thy ripened sheaves.

Or, if thine be an orchard, graft and prop
Food-bearing trees each watered in its place:
Or, if a garden, let it yield for crop
Sweet herbs and herb of grace.—

But if my lot be sand where nothing grows?—
Nay who hath said it? Tune a thankful psalm:
For, though thy desert bloom not as the rose,
It yet can rear thy palm.

FAINT YET PURSUING

I

Beyond this shadow and this turbulent sea,
Shadow of death and turbulent sea of death,
Lies all we long to have or long to be.
Take heart, tired man, toil on with lessening breath,
Lay violent hands on heaven's high treasury,
Be what you long to be through life-long scathe.
A little while Hope leans on Charity,
A little while Charity heartens Faith:
A little while: and then what further while?
One while that ends not and that wearies not,
For ever new whilst evermore the same.
All things made new bear each a sweet new name;
Man's lot of death has turned to life his lot,
And tearful Charity to Love's own smile.

2

Press onward, quickened souls, who mounting move,
  Press onward, upward, fire with mounting fire;
  Gathering volume of untold desire,
Press upward, homeward, dove with mounting dove.
Point me the excellent way that leads above;
  Woo me with sequent will, me too to aspire;
  With sequent heart to follow higher and higher,
To follow all who follow on to Love.
Up the high steep, across the golden sill,
  Up out of shadows into very light,
    Up out of dwindling life to life aglow,
  I watch you, my beloved, out of sight;—
Sight fails me, and my heart is watching still:
    My heart fails, yet I follow on to know.

HEAVEN OVERARCHES

Heaven overarches earth and sea,
  Earth-sadness and sea-bitterness.
Heaven overarches you and me:
A little while and we shall be—
Please God—where there is no more sea
    Nor barren wilderness.

Heaven overarches you and me,
  And all earth's gardens and her graves.
Look up with me, until we see
The day break and the shadows flee.
What though to-night wrecks you and me
    If so to-morrow saves?

DREAM LAND

WHERE sunless rivers weep
Their waves into the deep,
She sleeps a charmèd sleep :
  Awake her not.
Led by a single star,
She came from very far
To seek where shadows are
  Her pleasant lot.

She left the rosy morn,
She left the fields of corn,
For twilight cold and lorn
  And water springs.
Through sleep, as through a veil,
She sees the sky look pale,
And hears the nightingale
  That sadly sings.

Rest, rest, a perfect rest
Shed over brow and breast ;
Her face is toward the west,
  The purple land.
She cannot see the grain
Ripening on hill and plain,
She cannot feel the rain
  Upon her hand.

Rest, rest, for evermore
Upon a mossy shore;
Rest, rest at the heart's core
  Till time shall cease:
Sleep that no pain shall wake,
Night that no morn shall break,
Till joy shall overtake
  Her perfect peace.

REST

O EARTH, lie heavily upon her eyes;
  Seal her sweet eyes weary of watching, Earth;
  Lie close around her; leave no room for mirth
With its harsh laughter, nor for sound of sighs.
She hath no questions, she hath no replies,
  Hushed in and curtained with a blessed dearth
  Of all that irked her from the hour of birth;
With stillness that is almost Paradise.
Darkness more clear than noonday holdeth her,
  Silence more musical than any song;
Even her very heart has ceased to stir;
Until the morning of Eternity
Her rest shall not begin nor end, but be;
  And when she wakes she will not think it long.

SLEEPING AT LAST

SLEEPING at last, the trouble and tumult over,
Sleeping at last, the struggle and horror past,
Cold and white, out of sight of friend and of lover,
Sleeping at last.

No more a tired heart downcast or overcast,
No more pangs that wring or shifting fears that hover,
Sleeping at last in a dreamless sleep locked fast.

Fast asleep. Singing birds in their leafy cover
Cannot wake her, nor shake her the gusty blast.
Under the purple thyme and the purple clover
Sleeping at last.

THE PRINCE'S PROGRESS

TILL all sweet gums and juices flow,
Till the blossom of blossoms blow,
The long hours go and come and go;
The bride she sleepeth, waketh, sleepeth,
Waiting for one whose coming is slow:—
Hark! the bride weepeth.

'How long shall I wait, come heat come rime?'—
'Till the strong Prince comes, who must come in time'
(Her women say): 'there's a mountain to climb,
A river to ford. Sleep, dream and sleep;
Sleep' (they say): 'we've muffled the chime;
Better dream than weep.'

In his world-end palace the strong Prince sat,
Taking his ease on cushion and mat;
Close at hand lay his staff and his hat.
'When wilt thou start? the bride waits, O youth.'—
'Now the moon's at full; I tarried for that;
Now I start in truth.

'But tell me first, true voice of my doom,
Of my veiled bride in her maiden bloom;
Keeps she watch through glare and through gloom,
Watch for me asleep and awake?'—
'Spell-bound she watches in one white room,
And is patient for thy sake.

'By her head lilies and rosebuds grow;
The lilies droop, will the rosebuds blow?
The silver slim lilies hang the head low;
Their stream is scanty, their sunshine rare;
Let the sun blaze out, and let the stream flow,
They will blossom and wax fair.

'Red and white poppies grow at her feet.
The blood-red wait for sweet summer heat,
Wrapped in bud-coats, hairy and neat;
But the white buds swell, one day they will burst,
Will open their death cups drowsy and sweet:—
Which will open the first?'

Then a hundred sad voices lifted a wail,
And a hundred glad voices piped on the gale:
'Time is short, life is short,' they took up the tale:
'Life is sweet, love is sweet, use to-day while you may;
Love is sweet, and to-morrow may fail;
Love is sweet, use to-day.'

While the song swept by, beseeching and meek,
Up rose the Prince with a flush on his cheek,
Up he rose to stir and to seek,
  Going forth in the joy of his strength:
Strong of limb if of purpose weak,
    Starting at length.

Forth he set in the breezy morn,
Across green fields of nodding corn,
As goodly a Prince as ever was born,
  Carolling with the carolling lark;—
Sure his bride will be won and worn
    Ere fall of the dark.

So light his step, so merry his smile,
A milkmaid loitered beside a stile,
Set down her pail and rested awhile,
  A wave-haired milkmaid, rosy and white;
The Prince, who had journeyed at least a mile,
    Grew athirst at the sight.

'Will you give me a morning draught?'—
'You're kindly welcome,' she said, and laughed.
He lifted the pail, new milk he quaffed;
  Then wiping his curly black beard like silk:
'Whitest cow that ever was calved
    Surely gave you this milk.'

Was it milk now, or was it cream?
Was she a maid, or an evil dream?
Her eyes began to glitter and gleam;
  He would have gone, but he stayed instead;
Green they gleamed as he looked in them:
    'Give me my fee,' she said.—

'I will give you a jewel of gold.'—
'Not so; gold is heavy and cold.'—
'I will give you a velvet fold
Of foreign work your beauty to deck.'—
'Better I like my kerchief rolled
Light and white round my neck.'—

'Nay,' cried he, 'but fix your own fee.'—
She laughed, 'You may give the full moon to me,
Or else sit under this apple-tree
Here for one idle day by my side;
After that I'll let you go free,
And the world is wide.'

Loth to stay, yet to leave her slack,
He half turned away, then he quite turned back:
For courtesy's sake he could not lack
To redeem his own royal pledge;
Ahead too the windy heaven lowered black
With a fire-cloven edge.

So he stretched his length in the apple-tree shade,
Lay and laughed and talked to the maid,
Who twisted her hair in a cunning braid
And writhed it in shining serpent-coils,
And held him a day and a night fast laid
In her subtle toils.

At the death of night and the birth of day,
When the owl left off his sober play,
And the bat hung himself out of the way,
Woke the song of mavis and merle,
And heaven put off its hodden grey
For mother-o'-pearl.

Peeped up daisies here and there,
Here, there, and everywhere;
Rose a hopeful lark in the air,
Spreading out towards the sun his breast:
While the moon set solemn and fair
Away in the West.

'Up, up, up,' called the watchman lark,
In his clear réveillée; 'Hearken, oh hark!
Press to the high goal, fly to the mark.
Up, O sluggard, new morn is born;
If still asleep when the night falls dark,
Thou must wait a second morn.'

'Up, up, up,' sad glad voices swelled:
'So the tree falls and lies as it's felled.
Be thy bands loosed, O sleeper, long held
In sweet sleep whose end is not sweet.
Be the slackness girt and the softness quelled
And the slowness fleet.'

Off he set. The grass grew rare,
A blight lurked in the darkening air,
The very moss grew hueless and spare,
The last daisy stood all astunt;
Behind his back the soil lay bare,
But barer in front.

A land of chasm and rent, a land
Of rugged blackness on either hand:
If water trickled its track was tanned
With an edge of rust to the chink;
If one stamped on stone or on sand
It returned a clink.

A lifeless land, a loveless land,
Without lair or nest on either hand :
Only scorpions jerked in the sand,
Black as black iron, or dusty pale ;
From point to point sheer rock was manned
By scorpions in mail.

A land of neither life nor death,
Where no man buildeth or fashioneth,
Where none draws living or dying breath ;
No man cometh or goeth there,
No man doeth, seeketh, saith,
In the stagnant air.

Some old volcanic upset must
Have rent the crust and blackened the crust,
Wrenched and ribbed it beneath its dust,
Above earth's molten centre at seethe,
Heaved and heaped it by huge upthrust
Of fire beneath.

Untrodden before, untrodden since :
Tedious land for a social Prince ;
Halting, he scanned the outs and ins,
Endless, labyrinthine, grim,
Of the solitude that made him wince,
Laying wait for him.

By bulging rock and gaping cleft,
Even of half mere daylight reft,
Rueful he peered to right and left,
Muttering in his altered mood :
'The fate is hard that weaves my weft,
Though my lot be good.'

Dim the changes of day to night,
Of night scarce dark to day not bright.
Still his road wound towards the right,
  Still he went, and still he went,
Till one night he spied a light,
    In his discontent.

Out it flashed from a yawn-mouthed cave,
Like a red-hot eye from a grave.
No man stood there of whom to crave
  Rest for wayfarer plodding by:
Though the tenant were churl or knave
    The Prince might try.

In he passed and tarried not,
Groping his way from spot to spot,
Towards where the cavern flare glowed hot:
  An old, old mortal, cramped and double,
Was peering into a seething-pot,
    In a world of trouble.

The veriest atomy he looked,
With grimy fingers clutching and crooked,
Tight skin, a nose all bony and hooked,
  And a shaking, sharp, suspicious way;
Blinking, his eyes had scarcely brooked
    The light of day.

Stared the Prince, for the sight was new;
Stared, but asked without more ado;
'May a weary traveller lodge with you,
  Old father, here in your lair?
In your country the inns seem few,
    And scanty the fare.'

The head turned not to hear him speak;
The old voice whistled as through a leak
(Out it came in a quavering squeak):
'Work for wage is a bargain fit:
If there's aught of mine that you seek
You must work for it.

'Buried alive from light and air
This year is the hundredth year,
I feed my fire with a sleepless care,
Watching my potion wane or wax:
Elixir of Life is simmering there,
And but one thing lacks.

If you're fain to lodge here with me,
Take that pair of bellows you see—
Too heavy for my old hands they be—
Take the bellows and puff and puff:
When the steam curls rosy and free
The broth's boiled enough.

'Then take your choice of all I have;
I will give you life if you crave.
Already I'm mildewed for the grave,
So first myself I must drink my fill:
But all the rest may be yours, to save
Whomever you will.'

Done,' quoth the Prince, and the bargain stood.
First he piled on resinous wood,
Next plied the bellows in hopeful mood;
Thinking, 'My love and I will live.
If I tarry, why life is good,
And she may forgive.'

The pot began to bubble and boil ;
The old man cast in essence and oil,
He stirred all up with a triple coil
Of gold and silver and iron wire,
Dredged in a pinch of virgin soil,
And fed the fire.

But still the steam curled watery white ;
Night turned to day and day to night ;
One thing lacked, by his feeble sight
Unseen, unguessed by his feeble mind :
Life might miss him, but Death the blight
Was sure to find.

So when the hundredth year was full
The thread was cut and finished the school.
Death snapped the old worn-out tool,
Snapped him short while he stood and stirred
(Though stiff he stood as a stiff-necked mule)
With never a word.

Thus at length the old crab was nipped.
The dead hand slipped, the dead finger dipped
In the broth as the dead man slipped :—
That same instant, a rosy red
Flushed the steam, and quivered and clipped
Round the dead old head.

The last ingredient was supplied
(Unless the dead man mistook or lied).
Up started the Prince, he cast aside
The bellows plied through the tedious trial,
Made sure that his host had died,
And filled a phial.

'One night's rest,' thought the Prince: 'This done,
Forth I speed with the rising sun:
With the morrow I rise and run,
Come what will of wind or of weather.
This draught of life, when my bride is won,
We'll drink together.'

Thus the dead man stayed in his grave,
Self-chosen, the dead man in his cave;
There he stayed, were he fool or knave,
Or honest seeker who had not found:
While the Prince outside was prompt to crave
Sleep on the ground.

'If she watches, go bid her sleep;
Bid her sleep, for the road is steep;
He can sleep who holdeth her cheap,
Sleep and wake and sleep again.
Let him sow, one day he shall reap,
Let him sow the grain.

'When there blows a sweet garden rose,
Let it bloom and wither if no man knows;
But if one knows when the sweet thing blows,
Knows, and lets it open and drop,
If but a nettle his garden grows
He hath earned the crop.'

Through his sleep the summons rang,
Into his ears it sobbed and it sang.
Slow he woke with a drowsy pang,
Shook himself without much debate,
Turned where he saw green branches hang,
Started though late.

For the black land was travelled o'er.
He should see the grim land no more.
A flowering country stretched before
  His face when the lovely day came back:
He hugged the phial of Life he bore,
    And resumed his track.

By willow courses he took his path,
Spied what a nest the kingfisher hath,
Marked the fields green to aftermath,
  Marked where the red-brown field-mouse ran,
Loitered a while for a deep stream bath,
    Yawned for a fellow-man.

Up on the hills not a soul in view,
In the vale not many nor few;
Leaves, still leaves and nothing new
  It's oh for a second maiden, at least,
To bear the flagon, and taste it too,
    And flavour the feast.

Lagging he moved, and apt to swerve;
Lazy of limb, but quick of nerve.
At length the water-bed took a curve,
  The deep river swept its bankside bare;
Waters streamed from the hill-reserve—
    Waters here, waters there.

High above and deep below,
Bursting, bubbling, swelling the flow,
Like hill torrents after the snow,—
  Bubbling, gurgling, in whirling strife,
Swaying, sweeping to and fro,—
    He must swim for his life.

Which way?—which way?—his eyes grew dim
With the dizzying whirl—which way to swim?
The thunderous downshoot deafened him;
  Half he choked in the lashing spray:
Life is sweet, and the grave is grim—
    Which way?—which way?

A flash of light, a shout from the strand:
'This way—this way; here lies the land!'
His phial clutched in one drowning hand;
  He catches—misses—catches a rope;
His feet slip on the slipping sand:
    Is there life?—is there hope?

Just saved, without pulse or breath—
Scarcely saved from the gulp of death;
Laid where a pillow shadoweth—
  Laid where a swelling turf is smooth.
(O Bride! but the Bridegroom lingereth
    For all thy sweet youth.)

Kind hands do and undo,
Kind voices whisper and coo:
'I will chafe his hands'—'And I'—'And you
  Raise his head, put his hair aside.'
(If many laugh, one well may rue:
    Sleep on, thou Bride.)

So the Prince was tended with care:
One wrung foul ooze from his clustered hair;
Two chafed his hands, and did not spare;
  But one propped his head that drooped awry:
Till his eyes oped, and at unaware
    They met eye to eye.

Oh a moon face in a shadowy place,
And a light touch and a winsome grace,
And a thrilling tender voice which says:
'Safe from waters that seek the sea—
Cold waters by rugged ways—
Safe with me.'

While overhead bird whistles to bird,
And round about plays a gamesome herd:
'Safe with us'—some take up the word—
'Safe with us, dear lord and friend:
All the sweeter if long deferred
Is rest in the end.'

Had he stayed to weigh and to scan,
He had been more or less than a man:
He did what a young man can,
Spoke of toil and an arduous way—
Toil to-morrow, while golden ran
The sands of to-day.

Slip past, slip fast,
Uncounted hours from first to last,
Many hours till the last is past,
Many hours dwindling to one—
One hour whose die is cast,
One last hour gone.

Come, gone—gone for ever—
Gone as an unreturning river—
Gone as to death the merriest liver—
Gone as the year at the dying fall—
To-morrow, to-day, yesterday, never—
Gone once for all.

Came at length the starting-day,
With last words, and last last words to say,
With bodiless cries from far away—
  Chiding wailing voices that rang
Like a trumpet-call to the tug and fray;
    And thus they sang:

'Is there life?—the lamp burns low;
Is there hope?—the coming is slow:
The promise promised so long ago,
  The long promise, has not been kept.
Does she live?—does she die?—she slumbers so
    Who so oft has wept.

'Does she live!—does she die?—she languisheth
As a lily drooping to death,
As a drought-worn bird with failing breath,
  As a lovely vine without a stay,
As a tree whereof the owner saith,
    "Hew it down to-day."'

Stung by that word, the Prince was fain
To start on his tedious road again.
He crossed the stream where a ford was plain,
  He clomb the opposite bank though steep,
And swore to himself to strain and attain
    Ere he tasted sleep.

Huge before him a mountain frowned
With foot of rock on the valley ground,
And head with snows incessant crowned,
  And a cloud mantle about its strength,
And a path which the wild goat hath not found
    In its breadth and length.

But he was strong to do and dare:
If a host had withstood him there,
He had braved a host with little care
  In his lusty youth and his pride,
Tough to grapple though weak to snare.
    He comes, O Bride.

Up he went where the goat scarce clings,
Up where the eagle folds her wings,
Past the green line of living things,
  Where the sun cannot warm the cold,—
Up he went as a flame enrings
    Where there seems no hold.

Up a fissure barren and black,
Till the eagles tired upon his track,
And the clouds were left behind his back,
  Up till the utmost peak was past:
Then he gasped for breath and his strength fell
      slack—
    He paused at last.

Before his face a valley spread
Where fatness laughed, wine, oil, and bread,
Where all fruit-trees their sweetness shed,
  Where all birds made love to their kind,
Where jewels twinkled, and gold lay red
    And not hard to find.

Midway down the mountain side
(On its green slope the path was wide)
Stood a house for a royal bride,
  Built all of changing opal stone,
The royal palace, till now descried
    In his dreams alone.

Less bold than in days of yore,
Doubting now though never before,
Doubting he goes and lags the more:
  Is the time late? does the day grow dim?
Rose, will she open the crimson core
    Of her heart to him?

Above his head a tangle glows
Of wine-red roses, blushes, snows,
Closed buds and buds that unclose,
  Leaves, and moss, and prickles too;
His hand shook as he plucked a rose,
    And the rose dropped dew.

Take heart of grace! the potion of Life
May go far to woo him a wife:
If she frown, yet a lover's strife
  Lightly raised can be laid again:
A hasty word is never the knife
    To cut love in twain.

Far away stretched the royal land,
Fed by dew, by a spice-wind fanned.
Light labour more, and his foot would stand
  On the threshold, all labour done;
Easy pleasure laid at his hand,
    And the dear Bride won.

His slackening steps pause at the gate—
Does she wake or sleep?—the time is late—
Does she sleep now, or watch and wait?
  She has watched, she has waited long,
Watching athwart the golden grate
    With a patient song.

Fling the golden portals wide,
The Bridegroom comes to his promised Bride:
Draw the gold-stiff curtains aside,
  Let them look on each other's face,
She in her meekness, he in his pride—
    Day wears apace.

Day is over, the day that wore.
What is this that comes through the door,
The face covered, the feet before?
  This that coming takes his breath;
This Bride not seen, to be seen no more
    Save of Bridegroom Death?

Veiled figures carrying her
Sweep by yet make no stir;
There is a smell of spice and myrrh,
  A bride-chant burdened with one name;
The bride-song rises steadier
    Than the torches' flame:—

'Too late for love, too late for joy,
  Too late, too late!
You loitered on the road too long,
  You trifled at the gate:
The enchanted dove upon her branch
  Died without a mate;
The enchanted princess in her tower
  Slept, died behind the grate;
Her heart was starving all the while
  You made it wait.

'Ten years ago, five years ago,
  One year ago,
Even then you had arrived in time,
  Though somewhat slow;

Then you had known her living face
Which now you cannot know :
The frozen fountain would have leaped,
The buds gone on to blow,
The warm south wind would have awaked
To melt the snow.

'Is she fair now as she lies ?
Once she was fair ;
Meet queen for any kingly king,
With gold-dust on her hair.
Now these are poppies in her locks,
White poppies she must wear ;
Must wear a veil to shroud her face
And the want graven there :
Or is the hunger fed at length,
Cast off the care ?

'We never saw her with a smile
Or with a frown ;
Her bed seemed never soft to her,
Though tossed of down ;
She little heeded what she wore,
Kirtle, or wreath, or gown ;
We think her white brows often ached
Beneath her crown,
Till silvery hairs showed in her locks
That used to be so brown

'We never heard her speak in haste ;
Her tones were sweet,
And modulated just so much
As it was meet :
Her heart sat silent through the noise
And concourse of the street.

There was no hurry in her hands,
No hurry in her feet;
There was no bliss drew nigh to her
That she might run to greet.

'You should have wept her yesterday,
Wasting upon her bed:
But wherefore should you weep to-day
That she is dead?
Lo we who love weep not to-day,
But crown her royal head.
Let be these poppies that we strew,
Your roses are too red:
Let be these poppies, not for you
Cut down and spread.'

MY DREAM

Hear now a curious dream I dreamed last night,
Each word whereof is weighed and sifted truth.

I stood beside Euphrates while it swelled
Like overflowing Jordan in its youth.
It waxed and coloured sensibly to sight;
Till out of myriad pregnant waves there welled
Young crocodiles, a gaunt blunt-featured crew,
Fresh-hatched perhaps and daubed with birthday dew.
The rest if I should tell, I fear my friend,
My closest friend, would deem the facts untrue;
And therefore it were wisely left untold;
Yet if you will, why, hear it to the end.

Each crocodile was girt with massive gold
And polished stones that with their wearers grew:
But one there was who waxed beyond the rest,
Wore kinglier girdle and a kingly crown,
Whilst crowns and orbs and sceptres starred his breast.
All gleamed compact and green with scale on scale,
But special burnishment adorned his mail
And special terror weighed upon his frown;
His punier brethren quaked before his tail,
Broad as a rafter, potent as a flail.
So he grew lord and master of his kin:
But who shall tell the tale of all their woes?
An execrable appetite arose,
He battened on them, crunched, and sucked them in.
He knew no law, he feared no binding law,
But ground them with inexorable jaw.
The luscious fat distilled upon his chin,
Exuded from his nostrils and his eyes,
While still like hungry death he fed his maw;
Till, every minor crocodile being dead
And buried too, himself gorged to the full,
He slept with breath oppressed and unstrung claw.

Oh marvel passing strange which next I saw!
In sleep he dwindled to the common size,
And all the empire faded from his coat.
Then from far off a wingèd vessel came,
Swift as a swallow, subtle as a flame:
I know not what it bore of freight or host,
But white it was as an avenging ghost.
It levelled strong Euphrates in its course;
Supreme yet weightless as an idle mote
It seemed to tame the waters without force
Till not a murmur swelled or billow beat.
Lo, as the purple shadow swept the sands,

The prudent crocodile rose on his feet,
And shed appropriate tears and wrung his hands.

What can it mean? you ask. I answer not
For meaning, but myself must echo, What?
And tell it as I saw it on the spot.

A CHILLY NIGHT

I ROSE at the dead of night,
And went to the lattice alone
To look for my Mother's ghost
Where the ghostly moonlight shone.

My friends had failed one by one,
Middle-aged, young, and old,
Till the ghosts were warmer to me
Than my friends that had grown cold.

I looked and I saw the ghosts
Dotting plain and mound:
They stood in the blank moonlight,
But no shadow lay on the ground:
They spoke without a voice
And they leaped without a sound.

I called: 'O my Mother dear,'—
I sobbed: 'O my Mother kind,
Make a lonely bed for me
And shelter it from the wind.

'Tell the others not to come
To see me night or day:
But I need not tell my friends
To be sure to keep away.'

My Mother raised her eyes,
They were blank and could not see:
Yet they held me with their stare
While they seemed to look at me.

She opened her mouth and spoke;
I could not hear a word,
While my flesh crept on my bones
And every hair was stirred.

She knew that I could not hear
The message that she told
Whether I had long to wait
Or soon should sleep in the mould:
I saw her toss her shadowless hair
And wring her hands in the cold.

I strained to catch her words,
And she strained to make me hear;
But never a sound of words
Fell on my straining ear.

From midnight to the cockcrow
I kept my watch in pain
While the subtle ghosts grew subtler
In the sad night on the wane.

From midnight to the cockcrow
I watched till all were gone,
Some to sleep in the shifting sea
And some under turf and stone:
Living had failed and dead had failed,
And I was indeed alone.

THE HOUR AND THE GHOST

BRIDE

O LOVE, love, hold me fast,
He draws me away from thee ;
I cannot stem the blast,
Nor the cold strong sea :
Far away a light shines
Beyond the hills and pines ;
It is lit for me.

BRIDEGROOM

I have thee close, my dear,
No terror can come near ;
Only far off the northern light shines clear.

GHOST

Come with me, fair and false,
To our home, come home.
It is my voice that calls :
Once thou wast not afraid
When I woo'd, and said,
'Come, our nest is newly made'—
Now cross the tossing foam.

BRIDE

Hold me one moment longer !
He taunts me with the past,
His clutch is waxing stronger ;
Hold me fast, hold me fast.

He draws me from thy heart,
And I cannot withhold :
He bids my spirit depart
With him into the cold :—
Oh bitter vows of old !

BRIDEGROOM

Lean on me, hide thine eyes :
Only ourselves, earth and skies,
Are present here : be wise.

GHOST

Lean on me, come away,
I will guide and steady :
Come, for I will not stay :
Come, for house and bed are ready.
Ah sure bed and house,
For better and worse, for life and death,
Goal won with shortened breath !
Come, crown our vows.

BRIDE

One moment, one more word,
While my heart beats still,
While my breath is stirred
By my fainting will.
O friend, forsake me not,
Forget not as I forgot :
But keep thy heart for me,
Keep thy faith true and bright ;
Through the lone cold winter night
Perhaps I may come to thee.

BRIDEGROOM

Nay peace, my darling, peace :
Let these dreams and terrors cease :
Who spoke of death or change or aught but ease ?

GHOST

O fair frail sin,
O poor harvest gathered in !
Thou shalt visit him again
To watch his heart grow cold :
To know the gnawing pain
I knew of old ;
To see one much more fair
Fill up the vacant chair,
Fill his heart, his children bear ;
While thou and I together,
In the outcast weather,
Toss and howl and spin.

LOVE FROM THE NORTH

I HAD a love in soft south land,
Beloved through April far in May ;
He waited on my lightest breath,
And never dared to say me nay.

He saddened if my cheer was sad,
But gay he grew if I was gay ;
We never differed on a hair,
My yes his yes, my nay his nay.

The wedding hour was come, the aisles
  Were flushed with sun and flowers that day;
I pacing balanced in my thoughts:
  'It's quite too late to think of nay.'—

My bridegroom answered in his turn,
  Myself had almost answered 'yea;'
When through the flashing nave I heard
  A struggle and resounding 'nay.'

Bridemaids and bridegroom shrank in fear,
  But I stood high who stood at bay:
'And if I answer yea, fair Sir,
  What man art thou to bar with nay?'

He was a strong man from the north,
  Light-locked, with eyes of dangerous grey:
'Put yea by for another time
  In which I will not say thee nay.'

He took me in his strong white arms,
  He bore me on his horse away
O'er crag, morass, and hairbreadth pass,
  But never asked me yea or nay.

He made me fast with book and bell,
  With links of love he makes me stay;
Till now I've neither heart nor power
  Nor will nor wish to say him nay.

IN THE ROUND TOWER AT JHANSI

8 JUNE 1857

A HUNDRED, a thousand to one; even so;
Not a hope in the world remained:
The swarming howling wretches below
Gained and gained and gained.

Skene looked at his pale young wife.
'Is the time come?'—'The time is come.'
Young, strong, and so full of life,
The agony struck them dumb.

Close his arm about her now,
Close her cheek to his,
Close the pistol to her brow—
God forgive them this!

'Will it hurt much?'—'No, mine own:
I wish I could bear the pang for both.'—
'I wish I could bear the pang alone:
Courage, dear, I am not loth.'

Kiss and kiss: 'It is not pain
Thus to kiss and die.
One kiss more.'—'And yet one again.'—
'Good-bye.'—'Good-bye.'

AN APPLE GATHERING

I PLUCKED pink blossoms from mine apple-tree
And wore them all that evening in my hair:
Then in due season when I went to see
I found no apples there.

With dangling basket all along the grass
As I had come I went the self-same track:
My neighbours mocked me while they saw me pass
So empty-handed back.

Lilian and Lilias smiled in trudging by,
Their heaped-up basket teazed me like a jeer;
Sweet-voiced they sang beneath the sunset sky,
Their mother's home was near.

Plump Gertrude passed me with her basket full,
A stronger hand than hers helped it along;
A voice talked with her through the shadows cool
More sweet to me than song.

Ah Willie, Willie, was my love less worth
Than apples with their green leaves piled above?
I counted rosiest apples on the earth
Of far less worth than love.

So once it was with me you stooped to talk
Laughing and listening in this very lane;
To think that by this way we used to walk
We shall not walk again!

I let my neighbours pass me, ones and twos
And groups; the latest said the night grew chill,
And hastened: but I loitered; while the dews
Fell fast I loitered still.

MAUDE CLARE

Out of the church she followed them
With a lofty step and mien:
His bride was like a village maid,
Maude Clare was like a queen.

'Son Thomas,' his lady mother said,
With smiles, almost with tears:
'May Nell and you but live as true
As we have done for years;

'Your father thirty years ago
Had just your tale to tell;
But he was not so pale as you,
Nor I so pale as Nell.'

My lord was pale with inward strife,
And Nell was pale with pride;
My lord gazed long on pale Maude Clare
Or ever he kissed the bride.

'Lo, I have brought my gift, my lord,
Have brought my gift,' she said:
'To bless the hearth, to bless the board,
To bless the marriage-bed.

'Here's my half of the golden chain
You wore about your neck,
That day we waded ankle-deep
For lilies in the beck.

'Here's my half of the faded leaves
We plucked from budding bough,
With feet amongst the lily leaves,—
The lilies are budding now.'

He strove to match her scorn with scorn,
  He faltered in his place:
'Lady,' he said,—'Maude Clare,' he said,—
  'Maude Clare':—and hid his face.

She turned to Nell: 'My Lady Nell,
  I have a gift for you;
Though, were it fruit, the bloom were gone,
  Or, were it flowers, the dew.

'Take my share of a fickle heart,
  Mine of a paltry love:
Take it or leave it as you will,
  I wash my hands thereof.'

'And what you leave,' said Nell, 'I'll take,
  And what you spurn I'll wear;
For he's my lord for better and worse,
  And him I love, Maude Clare.

'Yea though you're taller by the head,
  More wise, and much more fair,
I'll love him till he loves me best—
  Me best of all, Maude Clare.'

THE CONVENT THRESHOLD

THERE's blood between us, love, my love,
There's father's blood, there's brother's blood;
And blood's a bar I cannot pass.
I choose the stairs that mount above,
Stair after golden sky-ward stair,
To city and to sea of glass.
My lily feet are soiled with mud,
With scarlet mud which tells a tale
Of hope that was, of guilt that was,
Of love that shall not yet avail;
Alas, my heart, if I could bare
My heart, this selfsame stain is there:
I seek the sea of glass and fire
To wash the spot, to burn the snare;
Lo, stairs are meant to lift us higher:
Mount with me, mount the kindled stair.

Your eyes look earthward, mine look up.
I see the far-off city grand,
Beyond the hills a watered land,
Beyond the gulf a gleaming strand
Of mansions where the righteous sup;
Who sleep at ease among their trees,
Or wake to sing a cadenced hymn
With Cherubim and Seraphim.
They bore the cross, they drained the cup,
Racked, roasted, crushed, wrenched limb from limb,
They the offscouring of the world:
The heaven of starry heavens unfurled,
The sun before their face is dim.

You looking earthward, what see you?
Milk-white, wine-flushed among the vines,
Up and down leaping, to and fro,
Most glad, most full, made strong with wines,
Blooming as peaches pearled with dew,
Their golden windy hair afloat,
Love-music warbling in their throat,
Young men and women come and go.

You linger, yet the time is short:
Flee for your life, gird up your strength
To flee; the shadows stretched at length
Show that day wanes, that night draws nigh:
Flee to the mountain, tarry not.
Is this a time for smile and sigh,
For songs among the secret trees
Where sudden blue birds nest and sport?
The time is short and yet you stay:
To-day, while it is called to-day,
Kneel, wrestle, knock, do violence, pray;
To-day is short, to-morrow nigh:
Why will you die? why will you die?

You sinned with me a pleasant sin:
Repent with me, for I repent.
Woe's me the lore I must unlearn!
Woe's me that easy way we went,
So rugged when I would return!
How long until my sleep begin,
How long shall stretch these nights and days?
Surely, clean Angels cry, she prays;
She laves her soul with tedious tears:
How long must stretch these years and years?

I turn from you my cheeks and eyes,
My hair which you shall see no more—
Alas for joy that went before,
For joy that dies, for love that dies!
Only my lips still turn to you,
My livid lips that cry, Repent!
O weary life, O weary Lent,
O weary time whose stars are few!

How should I rest in Paradise,
Or sit on steps of heaven alone?
If Saints and Angels spoke of love,
Should I not answer from my throne,
Have pity upon me, ye my friends,
For I have heard the sound thereof.
Should I not turn with yearning eyes,
Turn earthwards with a pitiful pang?
Oh save me from a pang in heaven!
By all the gifts we took and gave,
Repent, repent, and be forgiven.
This life is long, but yet it ends;
Repent and purge your soul and save:
No gladder song the morning stars
Upon their birthday morning sang
Than Angels sing when one repents.

I tell you what I dreamed last night.
A spirit with transfigured face
Fire-footed clomb an infinite space.
I heard his hundred pinions clang,
Heaven-bells rejoicing rang and rang,
Heaven-air was thrilled with subtle scents,
Worlds spun upon their rushing cars:
He mounted shrieking 'Give me light!'

Still light was poured on him, more light;
Angels, Archangels he outstripped,
Exultant in exceeding might,
And trod the skirts of Cherubim.
Still 'Give me light,' he shrieked; and dipped
His thirsty face, and drank a sea,
Athirst with thirst it could not slake.
I saw him, drunk with knowledge, take
From aching brows the aureole crown—
His locks writhe like a cloven snake—
He left his throne to grovel down
And lick the dust of Seraphs' feet:
For what is knowledge duly weighed?
Knowledge is strong, but love is sweet;
Yea all the progress he had made
Was but to learn that all is small
Save love, for love is all in all.

I tell you what I dreamed last night.
It was not dark, it was not light,
Cold dews had drenched my plenteous hair
Through clay; you came to seek me there,
And 'Do you dream of me?' you said.
My heart was dust that used to leap
To you; I answered half asleep:
'My pillow is damp, my sheets are red,
There's a leaden tester to my bed:
Find you a warmer playfellow,
A warmer pillow for your head,
A kinder love to love than mine.'
You wrung your hands: while I, like lead,
Crushed downwards through the sodden earth:
You smote your hands but not in mirth,
And reeled but were not drunk with wine.

For all night long I dreamed of you:
I woke and prayed against my will,
Then slept to dream of you again.
At length I rose and knelt and prayed.
I cannot write the words I said,
My words were slow, my tears were few;
But through the dark my silence spoke
Like thunder. When this morning broke,
My face was pinched, my hair was grey,
And frozen blood was on the sill
Where stifling in my struggle I lay.

If now you saw me you would say:
Where is the face I used to love?
And I would answer: Gone before;
It tarries veiled in Paradise.
When once the morning star shall rise,
When earth with shadow flees away
And we stand safe within the door,
Then you shall lift the veil thereof.
Look up, rise up: for far above
Our palms are grown, our place is set;
There we shall meet as once we met,
And love with old familiar love.

SISTER MAUDE

Who told my mother of my shame,
  Who told my father of my dear?
Oh who but Maude, my sister Maude,
  Who lurked to spy and peer?

Cold he lies, as cold as stone,
  With his clotted curls about his face:
The comeliest corpse in all the world
  And worthy of a queen's embrace.

You might have spared his soul, sister,
  Have spared my soul, your own soul too:
Though I had not been born at all,
  He'd never have looked at you.

My father may sleep in Paradise,
  My mother at Heaven-gate:
But sister Maude shall get no sleep
  Either early or late.

My father may wear a golden gown,
  My mother a crown may win;
If my dear and I knocked at Heaven-gate
  Perhaps they'd let us in:
But sister Maude, O sister Maude,
  Bide *you* with death and sin.

NOBLE SISTERS

'Now did you mark a falcon,
Sister dear, sister dear,
Flying toward my window
In the morning cool and clear?
With jingling bells about her neck,
But what beneath her wing?
It may have been a ribbon,
Or it may have been a ring.'—
'I marked a falcon swooping
At the break of day:
And for your love, my sister dove,
I 'frayed the thief away.'—

'Or did you spy a ruddy hound,
Sister fair and tall,
Went snuffing round my garden bound,
Or crouched by my bower wall?
With a silken leash about his neck
But in his mouth may be
A chain of gold and silver links,
Or a letter writ to me.'—
'I heard a hound, highborn sister,
Stood baying at the moon:
I rose and drove him from your wall
Lest you should wake too soon.'—

'Or did you meet a pretty page
Sat swinging on the gate?
Sat whistling whistling like a bird,
Or may be slept too late:
With eaglets broidered on his cap,
And eaglets on his glove.

If you had turned his pockets out,
You had found some pledge of love.'—
'I met him at this daybreak,
Scarce the east was red:
Lest the creaking gate should anger you
I packed him home to bed.'—

'O patience, sister! Did you see
A young man tall and strong,
Swift-footed to uphold the right
And to uproot the wrong,
Come home across the desolate sea
To woo me for his wife?
And in his heart my heart is locked,
And in his life my life.'—
'I met a nameless man, sister,
Who loitered round our door:
I said: Her husband loves her much
And yet she loves him more.'—

'Fie, sister, fie, a wicked lie!
A lie, a wicked lie!
I have none other love but him,
Nor will have till I die.
And you have turned him from our door
And stabbed him with a lie:
I will go seek him thro' the world
In sorrow till I die.'—
'Go seek in sorrow, sister,
And find in sorrow too:
If thus you shame our father's name
My curse go forth with you.'

A ROYAL PRINCESS

I a Princess king-descended, deckt with jewels, gilded, drest,
Would rather be a peasant with her baby at her breast,
For all I shine so like the sun, and am purple like the west.

Two and two my guards behind, two and two before,
Two and two on either hand, they guard me evermore:
Me, poor dove that must not coo—eagle that must not soar.

All my fountains cast up perfumes, all my gardens grow
Scented woods and foreign spices, with all flowers in blow
That are costly, out of season as the seasons go.

All my walls are lost in mirrors, whereupon I trace
Self to right hand, self to left hand, self in every place,
Self-same solitary figure, self-same seeking face.

Then I have an ivory chair high to sit upon,
Almost like my father's chair which is an ivory throne;
There I sit uplift and upright, there I sit alone,

Alone by day, alone by night, alone days without end;
My father and my mother give me treasures, search and spend—
O my father! O my mother! have you ne'er a friend?

As I am a lofty princess, so my father is
A lofty king, accomplished in all kingly subtilties,
Holding in his strong right hand world-kingdoms' balances.

He has quarrelled with his neighbours, he has scourged
his foes;
Vassal counts and princes follow where his pennon goes,
Long-descended valiant lords whom the vulture knows,

On whose track the vulture swoops, when they ride in
state
To break the strength of armies and topple down the
great:
Each of these my courteous servant, none of these my
mate.

My father counting up his strength sets down with equal
pen
So many head of cattle, head of horses, head of men;
These for slaughter, these for labour, with the how and
when.

Some to work on roads, canals; some to man his ships;
Some to smart in mines beneath sharp overseers' whips;
Some to trap fur-beasts in lands where utmost winter
nips.

Once it came into my heart, and whelmed me like a
flood,
That these too are men and women, human flesh and
blood;
Men with hearts and men with souls, though trodden
down like mud.

Our feasting was not glad that night, our music was not
gay:
On my mother's graceful head I marked a thread of
grey,
My father frowning at the fare seemed every dish to
weigh.

I sat beside them sole princess in my exalted place,
My ladies and my gentlemen stood by me on the dais:
A mirror showed me I look old and haggard in the face;

It showed me that my ladies all are fair to gaze upon,
Plump, plenteous-haired, to every one love's secret lore is known,
They laugh by day, they sleep by night; ah me, what is a throne?

The singing men and women sang that night as usual,
The dancers danced in pairs and sets, but music had a fall,
A melancholy windy fall as at a funeral.

Amid the toss of torches to my chamber back we swept;
My ladies loosed my golden chain; meantime I could have wept
To think of some in galling chains whether they waked or slept.

I took my bath of scented milk, delicately waited on:
They burned sweet things for my delight, cedar and cinnamon,
They lit my shaded silver lamp, and left me there alone.

A day went by, a week went by. One day I heard it said:
'Men are clamouring, women, children, clamouring to be fed;
Men like famished dogs are howling in the streets for bread.'

So two whispered by my door, not thinking I could hear,
Vulgar naked truth, ungarnished for a royal ear;
Fit for cooping in the background, not to stalk so near.

But I strained my utmost sense to catch this truth, and mark :
'There are families out grazing, like cattle in the park.'
'A pair of peasants must be saved, even if we build an ark.'

A merry jest, a merry laugh : each strolled upon his way ;
One was my page, a lad I reared and bore with day by day ;
One was my youngest maid, as sweet and white as cream in May.

Other footsteps followed softly with a weightier tramp ;
Voices said : 'Picked soldiers have been summoned from the camp,
To quell these base-born ruffians who make free to howl and stamp.'

'Howl and stamp?' one answered : 'They made free to hurl a stone
At the minister's state coach, well aimed and stoutly thrown.'
'There's work then for the soldiers, for this rank crop must be mown.'

'One I saw, a poor old fool with ashes on his head,
Whimpering because a girl had snatched his crust of bread :
Then he dropped ; when some one raised him, it turned out he was dead.'

'After us the deluge,' was retorted with a laugh :
'If bread's the staff of life they must walk without a staff.'
'While I've a loaf they're welcome to my blessing and the chaff.'

These passed. 'The king': stand up. Said my father
with a smile:
'Daughter mine, your mother comes to sit with you
awhile;
She's sad to-day, and who but you her sadness can
beguile?'

He too left me. Shall I touch my harp now while I
wait,—
(I hear them doubling guard below before our palace
gate)—
Or shall I work the last gold stitch into my veil of state;

Or shall my woman stand and read some unimpassioned
scene,—
There's music of a lulling sort in words that pause
between;
Or shall she merely fan me while I wait here for the
queen?

Again I caught my father's voice in sharp word of
command:
'Charge!' a clash of steel: 'Charge again, the rebels
stand.
Smite and spare not, hand to hand; smite and spare not,
hand to hand.'

There swelled a tumult at the gate, high voices waxing
higher;
A flash of red reflected light lit the cathedral spire;
I heard a cry for faggots, then I heard a yell for fire.

'Sit and roast there with your meat, sit and bake there
with your bread,
You who sat to see us starve,' one shrieking woman said:
'Sit on your throne and roast with your crown upon your
head.'

Nay, this thing will I do, while my mother tarrieth,
I will take my fine spun gold, but not to sew therewith,
I will take my gold and gems, and rainbow fan and wreath;

With a ransom in my lap, a king's ransom in my hand,
I will go down to this people, will stand face to face, will stand
Where they curse king, queen, and princess of this cursed land.

They shall take all to buy them bread, take all I have to give;
I, if I perish, perish; they to-day shall eat and live;
I, if I perish, perish—that's the goal I half conceive

Once to speak before the world, rend bare my heart, and show
The lesson I have learned, which is death, is life, to know.
I, if I perish, perish: in the name of God I go.

MAIDEN-SONG

Long ago and long ago
And long ago still,
There dwelt three merry maidens
Upon a distant hill.
One was tall Meggan,
And one was dainty May,
But one was fair Margaret,
More fair than I can say,
Long ago and long ago.

When Meggan pluckt the thorny rose,
And when May pulled the brier,
Half the birds would swoop to see,
Half the beasts drew nigher,
Half the fishes of the streams
Would dart up to admire.
But, when Margaret pluckt a flag-flower
Or poppy hot aflame,
All the beasts and all the birds
And all the fishes came
To her hand more soft than snow.

Strawberry leaves and May-dew
In brisk morning air,
Strawberry leaves and May-dew
Make maidens fair.
'I go for strawberry leaves,'
Meggan said one day:
'Fair Margaret can bide at home,
But you come with me, May:
Up the hill and down the hill,
Along the winding way
You and I are used to go.'

So these two fair sisters
Went with innocent will
Up the hill and down again,
And round the homestead hill:
While the fairest sat at home,
Margaret like a queen,
Like a blush-rose, like the moon
In her heavenly sheen,

Fragrant-breathed as milky cow
  Or field of blossoming bean,
Graceful as an ivy bough
  Born to cling and lean;
Thus she sat to sing and sew.

When she raised her lustrous eyes
  A beast peeped at the door;
When she downward cast her eyes
  A fish gasped on the floor;
When she turned away her eyes
  A bird perched on the sill,
Warbling out its heart of love,
  Warbling warbling still,
With pathetic pleadings low.

Light-foot May with Meggan
  Sought the choicest spot,
Clothed with thyme-alternate grass:
  Then, while day waxed hot,
Sat at ease to play and rest,
  A gracious rest and play;
The loveliest maidens near or far,
  When Margaret was away,
Who sat at home to sing and sew.

Sun-glow flushed their comely cheeks,
  Wind-play tossed their hair,
Creeping things among the grass
  Stroked them here and there;
Meggan piped a merry note,
  A fitful wayward lay
While shrill as bird on topmost twig
  Piped merry May;
Honey-smooth the double flow.

Sped a herdsman from the vale,
  Mounting like a flame ;
All on fire to hear and see,
  With floating locks he came.
Looked neither north nor south,
  Neither east nor west,
But sat him down at Meggan's feet
  As love-bird on his nest,
And wooed her with a silent awe,
  With trouble not expressed ;
She sang the tears into his eyes,
  The heart out of his breast :
So he loved her, listening so.

She sang the heart out of his breast,
  The words out of his tongue ;
Hand and foot and pulse he paused
  Till her song was sung.
Then he spoke up from his place
  Simple words and true :
'Scanty goods have I to give,
  Scanty skill to woo ;
But I have a will to work,
  And a heart for you :
Bid me stay or bid me go.'

Then Meggan mused within herself :
  'Better be first with him
Than dwell where fairer Margaret sits,
  Who shines my brightness dim,
For ever second where she sits,
  However fair I be :

I will be lady of his love,
And he shall worship me;
I will be lady of his herds
And stoop to his degree,
At home where kids and fatlings grow.'

Sped a shepherd from the height
Headlong down to look,
(White lambs followed, lured by love
Of their shepherd's crook):
He turned neither east nor west,
Neither north nor south,
But knelt right down to May, for love
Of her sweet-singing mouth;
Forgot his flocks, his panting flocks
In parching hill-side drouth;
Forgot himself for weal or woe.

Trilled her song and swelled her song
With maiden coy caprice
In a labyrinth of throbs,
Pauses, cadences;
Clear-noted as a dropping brook,
Soft-noted like the bees,
Wild-noted as the shivering wind
Forlorn through forest-trees:
Love-noted like the wood-pigeon
Who hides herself for love,
Yet cannot keep her secret safe,
But coos and coos thereof:
Thus the notes rang loud or low.

He hung breathless on her breath,
Speechless, who listened well:
Could not speak or think or wish
Till silence broke the spell.

Then he spoke, and spread his hands,
  Pointing here and there:
'See my sheep and see the lambs,
  Twin lambs which they bare.
All myself I offer you,
  All my flocks and care,
Your sweet song hath moved me so.'

In her fluttered heart young May
  Mused a dubious while:
'If he loves me as he says'—
  Her lips curved with a smile:
'Where Margaret shines like the sun
  I shine but like a moon:
If sister Meggan makes her choice
  I can make mine as soon;
At cockcrow we were sister-maids,
  We may be brides at noon.'
Said Meggan 'Yes'; May said not 'No.'

Fair Margaret stayed alone at home;
  Awhile she sang her song,
Awhile sat silent, then she thought
  'My sisters loiter long.'
That sultry noon had waned away,
  Shadows had waxen great:
'Surely,' she thought within herself,
  'My sisters loiter late.'
She rose, and peered out at the door,
  With patient heart to wait,
And heard a distant nightingale
  Complaining of its mate;
Then down the garden slope she walked,
  Down to the garden gate,
Leaned on the rail and waited so.

The slope was lightened by her eyes
  Like summer lightning fair,
Like rising of the haloed moon
  Lightened her glimmering hair,
While her face lightened like the sun
  Whose dawn is rosy white.
Thus crowned with maiden majesty
  She peered into the night,
Looked up the hill and down the hill,
  To left hand and to right,
Flashing like fire-flies to and fro.

Waiting thus in weariness
  She marked the nightingale
Telling, if any one would heed,
  Its old complaining tale.
Then lifted she her voice and sang,
  Answering the bird:
Then lifted she her voice and sang;
  Such notes were never heard
From any bird when Spring's in blow.

The king of all that country,
  Coursing far, coursing near,
Curbed his amber-bitted steed,
  Coursed amain to hear;
All his princes in his train,
  Squire and knight and peer,
With his crown upon his head,
  His sceptre in his hand,
Down he fell at Margaret's knees
  Lord king of all that land,
To her highness bending low.

Every beast and bird and fish
Came mustering to the sound,
Every man and every maid
From miles of country round :
Meggan on her herdsman's arm,
With her shepherd May,
Flocks and herds trooped at their heels
Along the hill-side way ;
No foot too feeble for the ascent,
Not any head too grey ;
Some were swift and none were slow.

So Margaret sang her sisters home
In their marriage mirth ;
Sang free birds out of the sky,
Beasts along the earth,
Sang up fishes of the deep—
All breathing things that move—
Sang from far and sang from near
To her lovely love ;
Sang together friend and foe ;

Sang a golden-bearded king
Straightway to her feet,
Sang him silent where he knelt
In eager anguish sweet.
But when the clear voice died away,
When longest echoes died,
He stood up like a royal man
And claimed her for his bride.
So three maids were wooed and won
In a brief May-tide,
Long ago and long ago.

A BIRD'S-EYE VIEW

'Croak, croak, croak,
Thus the Raven spoke,
Perched on his crooked tree,
As hoarse as hoarse could be.
Shun him and fear him,
Lest the Bridegroom hear him;
Scout him and rout him
With his ominous eye about him.

Yet 'Croak, croak, croak,'
Still tolled from the oak,
From that fatal black bird
Whether heard or unheard:
'O ship upon the high seas,
Freighted with lives and spices,
Sink, O ship,' croaked the Raven:
'Let the Bride mount to heaven.'

In a far foreign land
Upon the wave-edged sand,
Some friends gaze wistfully
Across the glittering sea.
'If we could clasp our sister,
Three say, 'Now we have missed her!
'If we could kiss our daughter!'
Two sigh across the water.

Oh the ship sails fast
With silken flags at the mast,
And the home-wind blows soft.
But a Raven sits aloft,
Chuckling and choking,
Croaking, croaking, croaking.
Let the beacon-fire blaze higher;
Bridegroom, watch; the Bride draws nigher.

On a sloped sandy beach,
Which the spring-tide billows reach,
Stand a watchful throng
Who have hoped and waited long:
'Fie on this ship that tarries
With the priceless freight it carries!
The time seems long and longer:
O languid wind, wax stronger;'—

Whilst the Raven perched at ease
Still croaks and does not cease,
One monotonous note
Tolled from his iron throat:
'No father, no mother,
But I have a sable brother:
He sees where ocean flows to,
And he knows what he knows too.'

A day and a night
They kept watch worn and white;
A night and a day
For the swift ship on its way:
For the Bride and her maidens—
Clear chimes the bridal cadence—
For the tall ship that never
Hove in sight for ever.

On either shore, some
Stand in grief loud or dumb
As the dreadful dread
Grows certain though unsaid.
For laughter there is weeping,
And waking instead of sleeping,
And a desperate sorrow
Morrow after morrow.

Oh who knows the truth?
How she perished in her youth,
And like a queen went down
Pale in her royal crown:
How she went up to glory
From the sea-foam chill and hoary,
From the sea-depth black and riven
To the calm that is in Heaven.

They went down, all the crew,
The silks and spices too,
The great ones and the small,
One and all, one and all.
Was it through stress of weather,
Quicksands, rocks, or all together?
Only the Raven knows this,
And he will not disclose this.—

After a day and a year
The bridal bell chimes clear;
After a year and a day
The Bridegroom is brave and gay.
Love is sound, faith is rotten:
The old Bride is forgotten:—
Two ominous Ravens only
Remember, black and lonely.

THE POOR GHOST

'Oh whence do you come, my dear friend, to me,
With your golden hair all fallen below your knee,
And your face as white as snowdrops on the lea,
And your voice as hollow as the hollow sea?'

'From the other world I come back to you:
My locks are uncurled with dripping drenching dew,
You know the old, whilst I know the new:
But to-morrow you shall know this too.'

'Oh not to-morrow into the dark, I pray;
Oh not to-morrow, too soon to go away:
Here I feel warm and well-content and gay:
Give me another year, another day.'

'Am I so changed in a day and a night
That mine own only love shrinks from me with fright,
Is fain to turn away to left or right
And cover up his eyes from the sight?'

'Indeed I loved you, my chosen friend,
I loved you for life, but life has an end;
Through sickness I was ready to tend:
But death mars all, which we cannot mend.

'Indeed I loved you; I love you yet,
If you will stay where your bed is set,
Where I have planted a violet,
Which the wind waves, which the dew makes wet.'

'Life is gone, then love too is gone,
It was a reed that I leant upon:
Never doubt I will leave you alone
And not wake you rattling bone with bone.

'I go home alone to my bed,
Dug deep at the foot and deep at the head,
Roofed in with a load of lead,
Warm enough for the forgotten dead.

'But why did your tears soak through the clay,
And why did your sobs wake me where I lay?
I was away, far enough away:
Let me sleep now till the Judgment Day.'

A FARM WALK

THE year stood at its equinox
And bluff the North was blowing,
A bleat of lambs came from the flocks,
Green hardy things were growing;
I met a maid with shining locks
Where milky kine were lowing.

She wore a kerchief on her neck,
Her bare arm showed its dimple,
Her apron spread without a speck,
Her air was frank and simple.

She milked into a wooden pail
And sang a country ditty,
An innocent fond lovers' tale
That was not wise nor witty,
Pathetically rustical,
Too pointless for the city.

She kept in time without a beat
As true as church-bell ringers,
Unless she tapped time with her feet,
Or squeezed it with her fingers;
Her clear unstudied notes were sweet
As many a practised singer's.

I stood a minute out of sight,
Stood silent for a minute,
To eye the pail, and creamy white
The frothing milk within it;

To eye the comely milking maid,
Herself so fresh and creamy.
'Good day to you,' at last I said;
She turned her head to see me:
'Good day,' she said with lifted head;
Her eyes looked soft and dreamy.

And all the while she milked and milked
The grave cow heavy-laden.
I've seen grand ladies plumed and silked,
But not a sweeter maiden;

But not a sweeter fresher maid
Than this in homely cotton,
Whose pleasant face and silky braid
I have not yet forgotten.

Seven springs have passed since then, as I
Count with a sober sorrow;
Seven springs have come and passed me by,
And spring sets in to-morrow.

I've half a mind to shake myself
Free just for once from London,
To set my work upon the shelf
And leave it done or undone;

To run down by the early train,
Whirl down with shriek and whistle,
And feel the bluff North blow again,
And mark the sprouting thistle
Set up on waste patch of the lane
Its green and tender bristle;

And spy the scarce-blown violet banks,
Crisp primrose leaves and others,
And watch the lambs leap at their pranks
And butt their patient mothers.—

Alas one point in all my plan
My serious thoughts demur to:
Seven years have passed for maid and man,
Seven years have passed for her too;

Perhaps my rose is overblown,
Not rosy or too rosy;
Perhaps in farmhouse of her own
Some husband keeps her cosy,
Where I should show a face unknown.—
Good-bye, my wayside posy.

SONGS IN A CORNFIELD

A song in a cornfield
  Where corn begins to fall,
Where reapers are reaping,
  Reaping one, reaping all.
Sing pretty Lettice,
  Sing Rachel, sing May;
Only Marian cannot sing
  While her sweetheart's away.

Where is he gone to
  And why does he stay?
He came across the green sea
  But for a day,
Across the deep green sea
  To help with the hay.
His hair was curly yellow
  And his eyes were grey,
He laughed a merry laugh
  And said a sweet say.
Where is he gone to
  That he comes not home?
To-day or to-morrow
  He surely will come.
Let him haste to joy,
  Lest he lag for sorrow,
For one weeps to-day
  Who'll not weep to-morrow;
To-day she must weep
  For gnawing sorrow,
To-night she may sleep
  And not wake to-morrow

May sang with Rachel
In the waxing warm weather,
Lettice sang with them,
They sang all together :—

'Take the wheat in your arm
Whilst day is broad above,
Take the wheat to your bosom,
But not a false false love.
Out in the fields
Summer heat gloweth,
Out in the fields
Summer wind bloweth,
Out in the fields
Summer friend showeth,
Out in the fields
Summer wheat groweth ;
But in the winter,
When summer heat is dead
And summer wind has veered
And summer friend has fled,
Only summer wheat remaineth,
White cakes and bread.
Take the wheat, clasp the wheat
That's food for maid and dove ;
Take the wheat to your bosom,
But not a false false love.'

A silence of full noontide heat
Grew on them at their toil :
The farmer's dog woke up from sleep,
The green snake hid her coil
Where grass stood thickest ; bird and beast
Sought shadows as they could,

The reaping men and women paused
And sat down where they stood;
They ate and drank and were refreshed,
For rest from toil is good.

While the reapers took their ease,
Their sickles lying by,
Rachel sang a second strain,
And singing seemed to sigh:—

'There goes the swallow—
Could we but follow!
Hasty swallow, stay,
Point us out the way;
Look back, swallow, turn back, swallow, stop, swallow.

'There went the swallow—
Too late to follow:
Lost our note of way,
Lost our chance to-day;
Good-bye, swallow, sunny swallow, wise swallow.

'After the swallow
All sweet things follow:
All things go their way,
Only we must stay,
Must not follow; good-bye, swallow, good swallow.'

Then listless Marian raised her head
Among the nodding sheaves;
Her voice was sweeter than that voice;
She sang like one who grieves:
Her voice was sweeter than its wont
Among the nodding sheaves;
All wondered while they heard her sing
Like one who hopes and grieves:—

'Deeper than the hail can smite,
Deeper than the frost can bite,
Deep asleep through day and night,
Our delight.

'Now thy sleep no pang can break,
No to-morrow bid thee wake,
Not our sobs who sit and ache
For thy sake.

'Is it dark or light below?
Oh but is it cold like snow?
Dost thou feel the green things grow
Fast or slow?

'Is it warm or cold beneath,
Oh but is it cold like death?
Cold like death, without a breath,
Cold like death?'

If he comes to-day,
He will find her weeping;
If he comes to-morrow,
He will find her sleeping;
If he comes the next day,
He'll not find her at all--
He may tear his curling hair,
Beat his breast, and call.

JESSIE CAMERON

'Jessie, Jessie Cameron,
Hear me but this once,' quoth he.
'Good luck go with you, neighbour's son,
But I'm no mate for you,' quoth she.
Day was verging toward the night
There beside the moaning sea:
Dimness overtook the light
There where the breakers be.
'O Jessie, Jessie Cameron,
I have loved you long and true.'—
'Good luck go with you, neighbour's son,
But I'm no mate for you.'

She was a careless fearless girl,
And made her answer plain,
Outspoken she to earl or churl,
Kindhearted in the main,
But somewhat heedless with her tongue
And apt at causing pain;
A mirthful maiden she and young,
Most fair for bliss or bane.
'Oh long ago I told you so,
I tell you so to-day:
Go you your way, and let me go
Just my own free way.'

The sea swept in with moan and foam,
Quickening the stretch of sand;
They stood almost in sight of home;
He strove to take her hand.

'Oh can't you take your answer then,
And won't you understand?
For me you're not the man of men,
I've other plans are planned.
You're good for Madge, or good for Cis,
Or good for Kate, may be:
But what's to me the good of this
While you're not good for me?'

They stood together on the beach,
They two alone,
And louder waxed his urgent speech,
His patience almost gone:
'Oh say but one kind word to me,
Jessie, Jessie Cameron.'—
'I'd be too proud to beg,' quoth she,
And pride was in her tone.
And pride was in her lifted head,
And in her angry eye,
And in her foot, which might have fled
But would not fly.

Some say that he had gipsy blood,
That in his heart was guile:
Yet he had gone through fire and flood
Only to win her smile.
Some say his grandam was a witch,
A black witch from beyond the Nile,
Who kept an image in a niche
And talked with it the while.
And by her hut far down the lane
Some say they would not pass at night,
Lest they should hear an unked strain
Or see an unked sight.

Alas for Jessie Cameron !—
  The sea crept moaning, moaning nigher ;
She should have hastened to be gone,—
  The sea swept higher, breaking by her :—
She should have hastened to her home
  While yet the west was flushed with fire,—
But now her feet are in the foam,
  The sea-foam sweeping higher.
O mother, linger at your door,
  And light your lamp to make it plain ;
But Jessie she comes home no more,
  No more again.

They stood together on the strand,
  They only each by each ;
Home, her home, was close at hand,
  Utterly out of reach.
Her mother in the chimney nook
  Heard a startled sea-gull screech,
But never turned her head to look
  Towards the darkening beach :
Neighbours here and neighbours there
  Heard one scream, as if a bird
Shrilly screaming cleft the air :—
  That was all they heard.

Jessie she comes home no more,
  Comes home never ;
Her lover's step sounds at his door
  No more for ever.
And boats may search upon the sea
  And search along the river,
But none know where the bodies be ;
  Sea-winds that shiver,

Sea-birds that breast the blast,
Sea-waves swelling,
Keep the secret first and last
Of their dwelling.

Whether the tide so hemmed them round
With its pitiless flow
That when they would have gone they found
No way to go;
Whether she scorned him to the last
With words flung to and fro,
Or clung to him when hope was past,
None will ever know:
Whether he helped or hindered her,
Threw up his life or lost it well,
The troubled sea for all its stir
Finds no voice to tell.

Only watchers by the dying
Have thought they heard one pray
Wordless, urgent; and replying
One seem to say him nay:
And watchers by the dead have heard
A windy swell from miles away,
With sobs and screams, but not a word
Distinct for them to say:
And watchers out at sea have caught
Glimpse of a pale gleam here or there,
Come and gone as quick as thought,
Which might be hand or hair.

EVE

'While I sit at the door,
Sick to gaze within,
Mine eye weepeth sore
For sorrow and sin:
As a tree my sin stands
To darken all lands;
Death is the fruit it bore.

'How have Eden bowers grown
Without Adam to bend them?
How have Eden flowers blown,
Squandering their sweet breath,
Without me to tend them?
The Tree of Life was ours,
Tree twelvefold-fruited,
Most lofty tree that flowers,
Most deeply rooted:
I chose the Tree of Death.

'Hadst thou but said me nay,
  Adam my brother,
I might have pined away—
  I, but none other:
God might have let thee stay
Safe in our garden,
By putting me away
Beyond all pardon.

'I, Eve, sad mother
Of all who must live,
I, not another,
Plucked bitterest fruit to give
My friend, husband, lover.

O wanton eyes, run over!
Who but I should grieve?
Cain hath slain his brother:
Of all who must die mother,
Miserable Eve!'

Thus she sat weeping,
Thus Eve our mother,
Where one lay sleeping
Slain by his brother.
Greatest and least
Each piteous beast
To hear her voice
Forgot his joys
And set aside his feast.

The mouse paused in his walk
And dropped his wheaten stalk;
Grave cattle wagged their heads
In rumination;
The eagle gave a cry
From his cloud station:
Larks on thyme beds
Forbore to mount or sing;
Bees drooped upon the wing;
The raven perched on high
Forgot his ration;
The conies in their rock,
A feeble nation,
Quaked sympathetical;
The mocking-bird left off to mock;
Huge camels knelt as if
In deprecation;
The kind hart's tears were falling;

Chattered the wistful stork;
Dove-voices with a dying fall
Cooed desolation,
Answering grief by grief.

Only the serpent in the dust,
Wriggling and crawling,
Grinned an evil grin and thrust
His tongue out with its fork.

AMOR MUNDI

'Oh where are you going with your love-locks flowing,
On the west wind blowing along this valley track?'
'The downhill path is easy, come with me an it please ye,
We shall escape the uphill by never turning back.'

So they two went together in glowing August weather,
The honey-breathing heather lay to their left and right;
And dear she was to doat on, her swift feet seemed to float on
The air like soft twin pigeons too sportive to alight.

'Oh what is that in heaven where grey cloud-flakes are seven,
Where blackest clouds hang riven just at the rainy skirt?'
'Oh that's a meteor sent us, a message dumb, portentous,
An undeciphered solemn signal of help or hurt.'

'Oh what is that glides quickly where velvet flowers grow thickly,
Their scent comes rich and sickly?' 'A scaled and hooded worm.'
'Oh what's that in the hollow, so pale I quake to follow?'
Oh that's a thin dead body which waits the eternal term.'

'Turn again, O my sweetest,—turn again, false and fleetest:
This beaten way thou beatest, I fear, is hell's own track.'
'Nay, too steep for hill mounting; nay, too late for cost counting:
This downhill path is easy, but there's no turning back.'

HUSBAND AND WIFE

'Oh kiss me once before I go,
To make amends for sorrow:
Oh kiss me once before we part,
For we mayn't meet to-morrow.

'And I was wrong to force your will,
And wrong to mar your life:
But kiss me once before we part
Because you are my wife.'

She turned her head and tossed her head,
And puckered up her brow:
'I never kissed you yet,' said she,
'And I'll not kiss you now.

'Though I'm your wife by might and right
And forsworn marriage vow,
I never loved you yet,' said she,
'And I don't love you now.'

So he went sailing on the sea,
And she sat crossed and dumb
While he went sailing on the sea
Where the storm-winds come.

He'd been away a month and day
Counting from morn to morn:
And many buds had turned to leaves,
And many lambs been born;

And many buds had turned to flowers
For Spring was in a glow,
When she was laid upon her bed
As white and cold as snow.

'Oh let me kiss my baby once,
Once before I die:
And bring it sometimes to my grave
To teach it where I lie.

'And tell my husband, when he comes
Safe back from sea,
To love the baby that I leave
If ever he loved me:

'And tell him, not for might or right
Or forsworn marriage vow,
But for the helpless baby's sake,
I would have kissed him now.'

MINNIE AND MATTIE

Minnie and Mattie
And fat little May,
Out in the country,
Spending a day.

Such a bright day,
With the sun glowing,
And the trees half in leaf,
And the grass growing.

Pinky white pigling
Squeals through his snout,
Woolly white lambkin
Frisks all about.

Cluck! cluck! the nursing hen
Summons her folk,—
Ducklings all downy soft,
Yellow as yolk.

Cluck! cluck! the mother hen
Summons her chickens
To peck the dainty bits
Found in her pickings.

Minnie and Mattie
And May carry posies,
Half of sweet violets,
Half of primroses.

Give the sun time enough,
Glowing and glowing,
He'll rouse the roses
And bring them blowing.

Don't wait for roses
  Losing to-day,
O Minnie, Mattie,
  And wise little May.

Violets and primroses
  Blossom to-day
For Minnie and Mattie
  And fat little May.

BRANDONS BOTH

Oh fair Milly Brandon, a young maid, a fair maid!
  All her curls are yellow and her eyes are blue,
And her cheeks were rosy red till a secret care made
  Hollow whiteness of their brightness as a care will do.

Still she tends her flowers, but not as in the old days,
  Still she sings her songs, but not the songs of old:
If now it be high Summer her days seem brief and cold days,
  If now it be high Summer her nights are long and cold.

If you have a secret, keep it, pure maid Milly:
  Life is filled with troubles and the world with scorn;
And pity without love is at best times hard and chilly,
  Chilling sore and stinging sore a heart forlorn.

Walter Brandon, do you guess Milly Brandon's secret?
  Many things you know, but not everything,
With your locks like raven's plumage, and eyes like an egret,
  And a laugh that is music, and such a voice to sing.

Nelly Knollys, she is fair, but she is not fairer
Than fairest Milly Brandon was before she turned so pale :
Oh but Nelly's dearer if she be not rarer,
She need not keep a secret or blush behind a veil.

Beyond the first green hills, beyond the nearest valleys,
Nelly dwells at home beneath her mother's eyes :
Her home is neat and homely, not a cot and not a palace,
Just the home where love sets up his happiest memories.

Milly has no mother ; and sad beyond another
Is she whose blessed mother is vanished out of call :
Truly comfort beyond comfort is stored up in a mother
Who bears with all, and hopes through all, and loves us all.

Where peacocks nod and flaunt up and down the terrace,
Furling and unfurling their scores of sightless eyes,
To and fro among the leaves and buds and flowers and berries
Maiden Milly strolls and pauses, smiles and sighs.

On the hedged-in terrace of her father's palace
She may stroll and muse alone, may smile or sigh alone,
Letting thoughts and eyes go wandering over hills and valleys
To-day her father's, and one day to be all her own.

If her thoughts go coursing down lowlands and up highlands,
It is because the startled game are leaping from their lair ;
If her thoughts dart homeward to the reedy river islands,
It is because the waterfowl rise startled here or there.

At length a footfall on the steps: she turns, composed and steady,
All the long-descended greatness of her father's house
Lifting up her head; and there stands Walter keen and ready
For hunting or for hawking, a flush upon his brows.

'Good-morrow, fair cousin.' 'Good-morrow, fairest cousin:
The sun has started on his course, and I must start to-day:
If you have done me one good turn you've done me many a dozen,
And I shall often think of you, think of you away.'

'Over hill and hollow what quarry will you follow,
Or what fish will you angle for beside the river's edge?
There's cloud upon the hill-top and there's mist deep down the hollow,
And fog among the rushes and the rustling sedge.'

'I shall speed well enough be it hunting or hawking,
Or casting a bait toward the shyest daintiest fin.
But I kiss your hands, my cousin; I must not loiter talking,
For nothing comes of nothing, and I'm fain to seek and win.'

'Here's a thorny rose: will you wear it an hour,
Till the petals drop apart still fresh and pink and sweet?
Till the petals drop from the drooping perished flower,
And only the graceless thorns are left of it.'

'Nay, I have another rose sprung in another garden,
Another rose which sweetens all the world for me.
Be you a tenderer mistress and be you a warier warden
Of your rose, as sweet as mine, and full as fair to see.'

'Nay, a bud once plucked there is no reviving,
Nor is it worth your wearing now, nor worth indeed my own;
The dead to the dead, and the living to the living.
It's time I go within, for it's time now you were gone.'

'Good-bye, Milly Brandon, I shall not forget you,
Though it be good-bye between us for ever from to-day;
I could almost wish to-day that I had never met you,
And I'm true to you in this one word that I say.'

'Good-bye, Walter. I can guess which thornless rose you covet;
Long may it bloom and prolong its sunny morn:
Yet as for my one thorny rose, I do not cease to love it,
And if it is no more a flower I love it as a thorn.'

A FISHER-WIFE

THE soonest mended, nothing said ;
And help may rise from east or west,
But my two hands are lumps of lead,
My heart sits leaden in my breast.

O north wind, swoop not from the north,
O south wind, linger in the south,
Oh come not raving raging forth,
To bring my heart into my mouth ;

For I've a husband out at sea,
Afloat on feeble planks of wood ;
He does not know what fear may be ;
I would have told him if I could.

I would have locked him in my arms,
I would have hid him in my heart ;
For oh the waves are fraught with harms,
And he and I so far apart !

ONE FOOT ON SEA, AND ONE ON SHORE

'Oh tell me once and tell me twice
And tell me thrice to make it plain,
When we who part this weary day,
When we who part shall meet again.'

'When windflowers blossom on the sea
And fishes skim along the plain,
Then we who part this weary day,
Then you and I shall meet again.'

'Yet tell me once before we part,
Why need we part who part in pain?
If flowers must blossom on the sea,
Why, we shall never meet again.

'My cheeks are paler than a rose,
My tears are salter than the main,
My heart is like a lump of ice
If we must never meet again.'

'Oh weep or laugh, but let me be,
And live or die, for all's in vain;
For life's in vain since we must part,
And parting must not meet again

'Till windflowers blossom on the sea
And fishes skim along the plain;
Pale rose of roses, let me be,—
Your breaking heart breaks mine again.'

THREE STAGES

1.—A PAUSE OF THOUGHT

I LOOKED for that which is not, nor can be,
And hope deferred made my heart sick in truth:
But years must pass before a hope of youth
Is resigned utterly.

I watched and waited with a steadfast will:
And though the object seemed to flee away
That I so longed for, ever day by day
I watched and waited still.

Sometimes I said: 'This thing shall be no more;
My expectation wearies and shall cease;
I will resign it now and be at peace':
Yet never gave it o'er.

Sometimes I said: 'It is an empty name
I long for; to a name why should I give
The peace of all the days I have to live?'—
Yet gave it all the same.

Alas thou foolish one! alike unfit
For healthy joy and salutary pain:
Thou knowest the chase useless, and again
Turnest to follow it.

2.—THE END OF THE FIRST PART

My happy happy dream is finished with,
My dream in which alone I lived so long.
My heart slept—woe is me, it wakeneth;
Was weak—I thought it strong.

Oh weary wakening from a life-true dream!
Oh pleasant dream from which I wake in pain
I rested all my trust on things that seem,
And all my trust is vain.

I must pull down my palace that I built,
Dig up the pleasure-gardens of my soul;
Must change my laughter to sad tears for guilt,
My freedom to control.

Now all the cherished secrets of my heart,
Now all my hidden hopes, are turned to sin.
Part of my life is dead, part sick, and part
Is all on fire within.

The fruitless thought of what I might have been.
Haunting me ever, will not let me rest.
A cold North wind has withered all my green,
My sun is in the West.

But, where my palace stood, with the same stone
I will uprear a shady hermitage:
And there my spirit shall keep house alone,
Accomplishing its age.

There other garden-beds shall lie around,
Full of sweet-briar and incense-bearing thyme:
There I will sit, and listen for the sound
Of the last lingering chime.

3

I thought to deal the death-stroke at a blow:
To give all, once for all, but never more:—
Then sit to hear the low waves fret the shore,
Or watch the silent snow.

'Oh rest,' I thought, 'in silence and the dark:
Oh rest, if nothing else, from head to feet:
Though I may see no more the poppied wheat,
Or sunny soaring lark.

'These chimes are slow, but surely strike at last:
This sand is slow, but surely droppeth through:
And much there is to suffer, much to do,
Before the time be past.

'So will I labour, but will not rejoice:
Will do and bear, but will not hope again:
Gone dead alike to pulses of quick pain
And pleasure's counterpoise.'

I said so in my heart: and so I thought
My life would lapse, a tedious monotone:
I thought to shut myself and dwell alone
Unseeking and unsought.

But first I tired, and then my care grew slack,
Till my heart dreamed, and maybe wandered too:—
I felt the sunshine glow again, and knew
The swallow on its track:

All birds awoke to building in the leaves,
All buds awoke to fullness and sweet scent:
Ah too my heart woke unawares, intent
On fruitful harvest-sheaves.

Full pulse of life, that I had deemed was dead;
Full throb of youth, that I had deemed at rest.
Alas I cannot build myself a nest,
I cannot crown my head

With royal purple blossoms for the feast,
Nor flush with laughter, nor exult in song:—
These joys may drift, as time now drifts along;
And cease, as once they ceased.

I may pursue, and yet may not attain,
Athirst and panting all the days I live:
Or seem to hold, yet nerve myself to give
What once I gave, again.

LOOKING FORWARD

SLEEP, let me sleep, for I am sick of care;
Sleep, let me sleep, for my pain wearies me.
Shut out the light, thicken the heavy air
With drowsy incense; let a distant stream
Of music lull me, languid as a dream,
Soft as the whisper of a summer sea.

Pluck me no rose that groweth on a thorn,
Nor myrtle white and cold as snow in June,
Fit for a virgin on her marriage morn:
But bring me poppies brimmed with sleepy death,
And ivy choking what it garlandeth,
And primroses that open to the moon.

Listen, the music swells into a song,
A simple song I loved in days of yore;
The echoes take it up and up along
The hills, and the wind blows it back again.—
Peace, peace, there is a memory in that strain
Of happy days that shall return no more.

O peace! your music wakeneth old thought,
But not old hope that made my life so sweet,
Only the longing that must end in nought.
Have patience with me, friends, a little while:
For soon, where you shall dance and sing and smile,
My quickened dust may blossom at your feet.

Sweet thought that I may yet live and grow green,
That leaves may yet spring from the withered root,
And buds and flowers and berries half unseen.
Then, if you haply muse upon the past,
Say this: Poor child, she has her wish at last;
Barren through life, but in death bearing fruit.

SHUT OUT

THE door was shut. I looked between
Its iron bars; and saw it lie,
My garden, mine, beneath the sky,
Pied with all flowers bedewed and green.

From bough to bough the song-birds crossed,
From flower to flower the moths and bees:
With all its nests and stately trees
It had been mine, and it was lost.

A shadowless spirit kept the gate,
Blank and unchanging like the grave.
I, peering through, said; 'Let me have
Some buds to cheer my outcast state.'

He answered not. 'Or give me, then,
But one small twig from shrub or tree;
And bid my home remember me
Until I come to it again.'

The spirit was silent; but he took
Mortar and stone to build a wall;
He left no loophole great or small
Through which my straining eyes might look.

So now I sit here quite alone,
Blinded with tears; nor grieve for that,
For nought is left worth looking at
Since my delightful land is gone.

A violet bed is budding near,
Wherein a lark has made her nest;
And good they are, but not the best;
And dear they are, but not so dear.

ACME

SLEEP, unforgotten sorrow, sleep awhile:
Make even awhile as though I might forget;
Let the wound staunch thy tedious fingers fret,
Till once again I look abroad and smile,
Warmed in the sunlight: let no tears defile
This hour's content, no conscious thorns beset
My path: O sorrow, slumber, slumber yet
A moment, rouse not yet the smouldering pile.
So shalt thou wake again with added strength,
O unforgotten sorrow, stir again
The slackening fire, refine the lulling pain
To quickened torture and a subtler edge.
The wrung cord snaps at last: beneath the wedge
The toughest oak groans long but rends at length.

INTROSPECTIVE

I WISH it were over the terrible pain,
Pang after pang again and again:
First the shattering ruining blow,
Then the probing steady and slow.

Did I wince? I did not faint:
My soul broke but was not bent:
Up I stand like a blasted tree
By the shore of the shivering sea.

On my boughs neither leaf nor fruit,
No sap in my uttermost root,
Brooding in an anguish dumb
On the short past and the long to-come.

Dumb I was when the ruin fell,
Dumb I remain and will never tell;
O my soul, I talk with thee,
But not another the sight must see.

I did not start when the torture stung,
I did not faint when the torture wrung:
Let it come tenfold if come it must,
But I will not groan when I bite the dust.

ANOTHER SPRING

If I might see another Spring,
I'd not plant summer flowers and wait:
I'd have my crocuses at once,
My leafless pink mezereons,
My chill-veined snowdrops, choicer yet
My white or azure violet,
Leaf-nested primrose; anything
To blow at once, not late.

If I might see another Spring,
I'd listen to the daylight birds
That build their nests and pair and sing,
Nor wait for mateless nightingale;

I'd listen to the lusty herds,
The ewes with lambs as white as snow,
I'd find out music in the hail
And all the winds that blow.

If I might see another Spring—
Oh stinging comment on my past
That all my past results in 'if'—
If I might see another Spring
I'd laugh to-day, to-day is brief;
I would not wait for anything:
I'd use to-day that cannot last,
Be glad to-day and sing.

MEMORY

I

I NURSED it in my bosom while it lived,
I hid it in my heart when it was dead.
In joy I sat alone; even so I grieved
Alone, and nothing said.

I shut the door to face the naked truth,
I stood alone—I faced the truth alone,
Stripped bare of self-regard or forms or ruth
Till first and last were shown.

I took the perfect balances and weighed;
No shaking of my hand disturbed the poise;
Weighed, found it wanting: not a word I said,
But silent made my choice.

None know the choice I made; I make it still.
None know the choice I made and broke my heart,
Breaking mine idol: I have braced my will
Once, chosen for once my part.

I broke it at a blow, I laid it cold,
Crushed in my deep heart where it used to live.
My heart dies inch by inch ; the time grows old,
Grows old in which I grieve.

II

I have a room whereinto no one enters
Save I myself alone :
There sits a blessed memory on a throne,
There my life centres ;

While winter comes and goes—oh tedious comer !—
And while its nip-wind blows ;
While bloom the bloodless lily and warm rose
Of lavish summer.

If any should force entrance he might see there
One buried yet not dead,
Before whose face I no more bow my head
Or bend my knee there ;

But often in my worn life's autumn weather
I watch there with clear eyes,
And think how it will be in Paradise
When we're together.

L. E. L.

'Whose heart was breaking for a little love.'

DOWNSTAIRS I laugh, I sport and jest with all;
But in my solitary room above
I turn my face in silence to the wall;
My heart is breaking for a little love
Though winter frosts are done,
And birds pair every one,
And leaves peep out, for springtide is begun.

I feel no spring, while spring is well-nigh blown,
I find no nest, while nests are in the grove:
Woe's me for mine own heart that dwells alone,
My heart that breaketh for a little love.
While golden in the sun
Rivulets rise and run,
While lilies bud, for springtide is begun.

All love, are loved, save only I; their hearts
Beat warm with love and joy, beat full thereof:
They cannot guess, who play the pleasant parts,
My heart is breaking for a little love.
While bee-hives wake and whirr,
And rabbit thins his fur,
In living spring that sets the world astir.

I deck myself with silks and jewelry,
I plume myself like any mated dove:
They praise my rustling show, and never see
My heart is breaking for a little love.
While sprouts green lavender
With rosemary and myrrh,
For in quick spring the sap is all astir.

Perhaps some saints in glory guess the truth,
  Perhaps some angels read it as they move,
And cry one to another full of ruth,
  'Her heart is breaking for a little love.'
    Though other things have birth,
    And leap and sing for mirth,
When springtime wakes and clothes and feeds the earth.

Yet saith a saint, 'Take patience for thy scathe';
  Yet saith an angel: 'Wait, and thou shalt prove
True best is last, true life is born of death,
  O thou, heart-broken for a little love.
    Then love shall fill thy girth,
    And love make fat thy dearth,
When new spring builds new heaven and clean new earth.'

MIRAGE

THE hope I dreamed of was a dream,
  Was but a dream; and now I wake,
Exceeding comfortless, and worn, and old,
  For a dream's sake.

I hang my harp upon a tree,
  A weeping willow in a lake;
I hang my silenced harp there, wrung and snapt
  For a dream's sake.

Lie still, lie still, my breaking heart;
  My silent heart, lie still and break:
Life, and the world, and mine own self, are changed
  For a dream's sake.

WHAT WOULD I GIVE!

WHAT would I give for a heart of flesh to warm me through,
Instead of this heart of stone ice-cold whatever I do!
Hard and cold and small, of all hearts the worst of all.

What would I give for words, if only words would come!
But now in its misery my spirit has fallen dumb.
O merry friends, go your way, I have never a word to say.

What would I give for tears! not smiles but scalding tears,
To wash the black mark clean, and to thaw the frost of years,
To wash the stain ingrain, and to make me clean again.

TWICE

I TOOK my heart in my hand,
(O my love, O my love),
I said: Let me fall or stand,
Let me live or die,
But this once hear me speak—
(O my love, O my love)—
Yet a woman's words are weak;
You should speak, not I.

You took my heart in your hand
With a friendly smile,
With a critical eye you scanned,
Then set it down,
And said: It is still unripe,
Better wait awhile;
Wait while the skylarks pipe,
Till the corn grows brown.

As you set it down it broke—
Broke, but I did not wince;
I smiled at the speech you spoke,
At your judgment that I heard:
But I have not often smiled
Since then, nor questioned since,
Nor cared for corn-flowers wild,
Nor sung with the singing bird.

I take my heart in my hand,
O my God, O my God,
My broken heart in my hand:
Thou hast seen, judge Thou.
My hope was written on sand,
O my God, O my God:
Now let Thy judgment stand—
Yea, judge me now.

This contemned of a man,
This marred one heedless day,
This heart take Thou to scan
Both within and without:
Refine with fire its gold,
Purge Thou its dross away—
Yea hold it in Thy hold,
Whence none can pluck it out.

I take my heart in my hand—
I shall not die, but live—
Before Thy face I stand;
I, for Thou callest such:
All that I have I bring,
All that I am I give;
Smile Thou and I shall sing,
But shall not question much.

IF I HAD WORDS

If I had words, if I had words
At least to vent my misery:—
But muter than the speechless herds
I have no voice wherewith to cry.
I have no strength to lift my hands,
I have no heart to lift mine eye,
My soul is bound with brazen bands,
My soul is crushed and like to die.
My thoughts that wander here and there,
That wander wander listlessly,
Bring nothing back to cheer my care,
Nothing that I may live thereby.
My heart is broken in my breast,
My breath is but a broken sigh—
Oh if there be a land of rest
It is far off, it is not nigh.
If I had wings as hath a dove,
If I had wings that I might fly,
I yet would seek the land of love
Where fountains run which run not dry:
Though there be none that road to tell,
And long that road is verily:

Then if I lived I should do well,
And if I died I should but die.
If I had wings as hath a dove,
I would not sift the what and why,
I would make haste to find out Love,
If not to find at least to try.
I would make haste to Love, my rest—
To Love, my truth that doth not lie:
Then if I lived it might be best,
Or if I died I could but die.

EN ROUTE

WHEREFORE art thou strange, and not my mother?
Thou hast stolen my heart and broken it:
Would that I might call thy sons 'My brother,'
Call thy daughters 'Sister sweet':
Lying in thy lap, not in another,
Dying at thy feet.

Farewell, land of love, Italy,
Sister-land of Paradise:
With mine own feet I have trodden thee,
Have seen with mine own eyes:
I remember, thou forgettest me,
I remember thee.

Blessed be the land that warms my heart,
And the kindly clime that cheers,
And the cordial faces clear from art,
And the tongue sweet in mine ears:
Take my heart, its truest tenderest part,
Dear land, take my tears.

AN 'IMMURATA' SISTER

Life flows down to death ; we cannot bind
That current that it should not flee :
Life flows down to death, as rivers find
The inevitable sea.

Men work and think, but women feel ;
And so (for I'm a woman, I)
And so I should be glad to die,
And cease from impotence of zeal,
And cease from hope, and cease from dread,
And cease from yearnings without gain,
And cease from all this world of pain,
And be at peace among the dead.

Hearts that die, by death renew their youth,
Lightened of this life that doubts and dies ;
Silent and contented, while the Truth
Unveiled makes them wise.

Why should I seek and never find
That something which I have not had?
Fair and unutterably sad
The world hath sought time out of mind ;
The world hath sought and I have sought,—
Ah empty world and empty I !
For we have spent our strength for nought,
And soon it will be time to die.

Sparks fly upward toward their fount of fire,
Kindling, flashing, hovering :—
Kindle, flash, my soul : mount higher and higher,
Thou whole burnt-offering !

OF MY LIFE

I WEARY of my life
Through the long sultry day,
While happy creatures play
Their harmless lives away:—
What is my life?

I weary of my life
Through the slow tedious night,
While, earth and heaven's delight,
The moon walks forth in white:—
What is my life?

If I might, I would die:
My soul should flee away
To day that is not day
Where sweet souls sing and say—
If I might die!

If I might, I would die:
My body out of sight,
All night that is not night
My soul should walk in white—
If I might die!

BY WAY OF REMEMBRANCE

Remember, if I claim too much of you,
I claim it of my brother and my friend:
Have patience with me till the hidden end—
Bitter or sweet, in mercy shut from view.
Pay me my due; though I to pay your due
Am all too poor, and past what will can mend:
Thus of your bounty you must give and lend,
Still unrepaid by aught I look to do.
Still unrepaid by aught of mine on earth:
But overpaid, please God, when recompense
Beyond the mystic Jordan and new birth
Is dealt to virtue as to innocence;
When Angels singing praises in their mirth
Have borne you in their arms and fetched you hence.

Will you be there? my yearning heart has cried.
Ah me, my love, my love, shall I be there,
To sit down in your glory and to share
Your gladness, glowing as a virgin bride?
Or will another, dearer, fairer-eyed,
Sit nigher to you in your jubilee,
And mindful one of other will you be
Borne higher and higher on joy's ebbless tide?
Yea, if I love I will not grudge you this:
I too shall float upon that heavenly sea
And sing my joyful praises without ache;
Your overflow of joy shall gladden me,
My whole heart shall sing praises for your sake,
And find its own fulfilment in your bliss.

In Resurrection is it awfuller
  That rising of the All or of the Each—
  Of all kins of all nations of all speech,
Or one by one of *him* and *him* and *her*?
When dust reanimate begins to stir,
  Here, there, beyond, beyond, reach beyond reach;
  While every wave disgorges on its beach,
Alive or dead-in-life, some seafarer.
In Resurrection, on the day of days,
  That day of mourning throughout all the earth,
    In Resurrection may we meet again:
    No more with stricken hearts to part in twain;
  As once in sorrow one, now one in mirth,
One in our resurrection-songs of praise.

I love you and you know it—this at least,
  This comfort is mine own in all my pain:
  You know it, and can never doubt again,
And love's mere self is a continual feast:
Not oath of mine nor blessing-word of priest
  Could make my love more certain or more plain.
  Life as a rolling moon doth wax and wane—
O weary moon, still rounding, still decreased!
Life wanes: and when Love folds his wings above
  Tired joy, and less we feel his conscious pulse,
    Let us go fall asleep, dear Friend, in peace;—
    A little while, and age and sorrow cease;
  A little while, and love reborn annuls
Loss and decay and death—and all is love.

LOVE LIES BLEEDING

Love, that is dead and buried, yesterday
  Out of his grave rose up before my face;
  No recognition in his look, no trace
Of memory in his eyes dust-dimmed and grey;
While I, remembering, found no word to say,
  But felt my quickened heart leap in its place;
  Caught afterglow thrown back from long-set days,
Caught echoes of all music past away.
Was this indeed to meet?—I mind me yet
  In youth we met when hope and love were quick,
    We parted with hope dead but love alive:
  I mind me how we parted then heart-sick,
    Remembering, loving, hopeless, weak to strive:-
Was this to meet? Not so, we have not met.

CONFLUENTS

As rivers seek the sea,
  Much more deep than they,
So my soul seeks thee
  Far away;
As running rivers moan
On their course alone,
  So I moan
  Left alone.

As the delicate rose
To the sun's sweet strength
Doth herself unclose,
Breadth and length;
So spreads my heart to thee
Unveiled utterly,
I to thee
Utterly.

As morning dew exhales
Sunwards pure and free
So my spirit fails
After thee.
As dew leaves not a trace
On the green earth's face;
I, no trace
On thy face.

Its goal the river knows,
Dewdrops find a way,
Sunlight cheers the rose
In her day:
Shall I, lone sorrow past,
Find thee at the last?
Sorrow past,
Thee at last?

VALENTINES TO MY MOTHER

1

My blessed Mother dozing in her chair
On Christmas Day seemed an embodied Love,
A comfortable Love with soft brown hair
Softened and silvered to a tint of dove;
A better sort of Venus with an air
Angelical from thoughts that dwell above;
A wiser Pallas in whose body fair
Enshrined a blessed soul looks out thereof.
Winter brought holly then; now Spring has brought
Paler and frailer snowdrops shivering;
And I have brought a simple humble thought—
I her devoted duteous Valentine—
A lifelong thought which thrills this song I sing,
A lifelong love to this dear Saint of mine.

2

Winter's latest snowflake is the snowdrop flower,
Yellow crocus kindles the first flame of the Spring,
At that time appointed, at that day and hour,
When life reawakens and hope in everything.

Such a tender snowflake in the wintry weather,
Such a feeble flamelet for chilled St. Valentine,—
But blest be any weather which finds us still together.
My pleasure and my treasure, O blessed Mother mine.

ONE SEA-SIDE GRAVE

UNMINDFUL of the roses,
Unmindful of the thorn,
A reaper tired reposes
Among his gathered corn:
So might I, till the morn!

Cold as the cold Decembers,
Past as the days that set,
While only one remembers
And all the rest forget,—
But one remembers yet.

SONG

WHEN I am dead, my dearest,
Sing no sad songs for me;
Plant thou no roses at my head,
Nor shady cypress tree:
Be the green grass above me
With showers and dewdrops wet:
And if thou wilt, remember,
And if thou wilt, forget.

I shall not see the shadows,
I shall not feel the rain;
I shall not hear the nightingale
Sing on as if in pain:
And dreaming through the twilight
That doth not rise nor set,
Haply I may remember,
And haply may forget.

THE SUMMER IS ENDED

WREATHE no more lilies in my hair,
For I am dying, Sister sweet:
Or, if you will for the last time
Indeed, why make me fair
Once for my winding-sheet.

Pluck no more roses for my breast,
For I like them fade in my prime:
Or, if you will, why pluck them still,
That they may share my rest
Once more for the last time.

Weep not for me when I am gone,
Dear tender one, but hope and smile:
Or, if you cannot choose but weep,
A little while weep on,
Only a little while.

REMEMBER

REMEMBER me when I am gone away,
Gone far away into the silent land;
When you can no more hold me by the hand
Nor I half turn to go yet turning stay.
Remember me when no more day by day
You tell me of our future that you plann'd:
Only remember me; you understand
It will be late to counsel then or pray.
Yet if you should forget me for a while
And afterwards remember, do not grieve:
For if the darkness and corruption leave
A vestige of the thoughts that once I had,
Better by far you should forget and smile
Than that you should remember and be sad.

A PAUSE

THEY made the chamber sweet with flowers and leaves,
And the bed sweet with flowers on which I lay;
While my soul, love-bound, loitered on its way.
I did not hear the birds about the eaves,
Nor hear the reapers talk among the sheaves:
Only my soul kept watch from day to day,
My thirsty soul kept watch for one away:—
Perhaps he loves, I thought, remembers, grieves.
At length there came the step upon the stair,
Upon the lock the old familiar hand:
Then first my spirit seemed to scent the air
Of Paradise; then first the tardy sand
Of time ran golden; and I felt my hair
Put on a glory, and my soul expand.

UP-HILL

'DOES the road wind up-hill all the way?'
'Yes, to the very end.'
'Will the day's journey take the whole long day?'
'From morn to night, my friend.'

'But is there for the night a resting-place?'
'A roof for when the slow dark hours begin.'
'May not the darkness hide it from my face?'
'You cannot miss that inn.'

'Shall I meet other wayfarers at night?'
'Those who have gone before.'
'Then must I knock, or call when just in sight?'
'They will not keep you standing at that door.'

'Shall I find comfort, travel-sore and weak?'
'Of labour you shall find the sum.'
'Will there be beds for me and all who seek?'
'Yea, beds for all who come.'

AT HOME

When I was dead, my spirit turned
To seek the much-frequented house.
I passed the door, and saw my friends
Feasting beneath green orange-boughs;
From hand to hand they pushed the wine,
They sucked the pulp of plum and peach;
They sang, they jested, and they laughed,
For each was loved of each.

I listened to their honest chat.
Said one; 'To-morrow we shall be
Plod plod along the featureless sands,
And coasting miles and miles of sea.'
Said one: 'Before the turn of tide
We will achieve the eyrie-seat.'
Said one: 'To-morrow shall be like
To-day, but much more sweet.'

'To-morrow,' said they, strong with hope,
And dwelt upon the pleasant way:
'To-morrow,' cried they one and all,
While no one spoke of yesterday.
Their life stood full at blessed noon;
I, only I, had passed away:
'To-morrow and to-day,' they cried;
I was of yesterday.

I shivered comfortless, but cast
No chill across the tablecloth;
I all-forgotten shivered, sad
To stay and yet to part how loth:
I passed from the familiar room,
I who from love had passed away,
Like the remembrance of a guest
That tarrieth but a day.

TO-DAY AND TO-MORROW

I

All the world is out in leaf,
Half the world in flower,
Earth has waited weeks and weeks
For this special hour:
Faint the rainbow comes and goes
On a sunny shower.

All the world is making love:
Bird to bird in bushes,
Beast to beast in glades, and frog
To frog among the rushes:
Wake, O south wind sweet with spice,
Wake the rose to blushes.

Life breaks forth to right and left—
Pipe wild-wood notes cheery.
Nevertheless there are the dead
Fast asleep and weary—
To-day we live, to-day we love,
Wake and listen, deary.

2

I wish I were dead, my foe,
My friend, I wish I were dead,
With a stone at my tired feet
And a stone at my tired head.

In the pleasant April days
Half the world will stir and sing,
But half the world will slug and rot
For all the sap of Spring.

YET A LITTLE WHILE

THESE days are long before I die:
To sit alone upon a thorn
Is what the nightingale forlorn
Does night by night continually:
She swells her heart to ecstasy
Until it bursts and she can die.

These days are long that wane and wax:
Waxeth and wanes the ghostly moon,
Achill and pale in cordial June:
What is it that she wandering lacks?
She seems as one that aches and aches,
Most sick to wane, most sick to wax.

Of all the sad sights in the world
The downfall of an Autumn leaf
Is grievous and suggesteth grief:
Who thought when Spring was fresh unfurled
Of this? when Spring-twigs gleamed impearled
Who thought of frost that nips the world?

There are a hundred subtle stings
To prick us in our daily walk:
A young fruit cankered on its stalk,
A strong bird snared for all his wings,
A nest that sang but never sings:
Yea sight and sound and silence stings.

There is a lack in solitude,
There is a load in throng of life:
One with another genders strife,
To be alone yet is not good:
I know but of one neighbourhood
At peace and full—death's solitude.

Sleep soundly, dears, who lulled at last
Forget the bird and all her pains,
Forget the moon that waxes, wanes,
The leaf, the sting, the frostful blast:
Forget the troublous years that, past
In strife or ache, did end at last.

We have clear call of daily bells,
A dimness where the anthems are,
A chancel vault of sky and star,
A thunder if the organ swells:
Alas our daily life—what else?—
Is not in tune with daily bells

You have deep pause betwixt the chimes
Of earth and heaven, a patient pause
Yet glad with rest by certain laws:
You look and long: while oftentimes
Precursive flush of morning climbs,
And air vibrates with coming chimes.

LIFE AND DEATH

Life is not sweet. One day it will be sweet
To shut our eyes and die;
Nor feel the wild flowers blow, nor birds dart by
With flitting butterfly,
Nor grass grow long above our heads and feet,
Nor hear the happy lark that soars sky-high,
Nor sigh that spring is fleet and summer fleet.
Nor mark the waxing wheat,
Nor know who sits in our accustomed seat.

Life is not good. One day it will be good
To die, then live again;
To sleep meanwhile; so, not to feel the wane
Of shrunk leaves dropping in the wood,
Nor hear the foamy lashing of the main,
Nor mark the blackened bean-fields, nor, where stood
Rich ranks of golden grain,
Only dead refuse stubble clothe the plain:
Asleep from risk, asleep from pain.

TWILIGHT CALM

Oh pleasant eventide!
Clouds on the western side
Grow grey and greyer, hiding the warm sun:
The bees and birds, their happy labours done,
Seek their close nests and bide.

Screened in the leafy wood
The stock-doves sit and brood:
The very squirrel leaps from bough to bough
But lazily; pauses; and settles now
Where once he stored his food.

One by one the flowers close,
Lily and dewy rose
Shutting their tender petals from the moon:
The grasshoppers are still; but not so soon
Are still the noisy crows.

The dormouse squats and eats
Choice little dainty bits
Beneath the spreading roots of a broad lime;
Nibbling his fill he stops from time to time
And listens where he sits.

From far the lowings come
Of cattle driven home:
From farther still the wind brings fitfully
The vast continual murmur of the sea,
Now loud, now almost dumb.

The gnats whirl in the air,
The evening gnats; and there
The owl opes broad his eyes and wings to sail
For prey; the bat wakes; and the shell-less snail
Comes forth, clammy and bare.

Hark! that's the nightingale,
Telling the self-same tale
Her song told when this ancient earth was young:
So echoes answered when her song was sung
In the first wooded vale.

We call it love and pain,
The passion of her strain;
And yet we little understand or know:
Why should it not be rather joy that so
Throbs in each throbbing vein?

In separate herds the deer
Lie; here the bucks, and here
The does, and by its mother sleeps the fawn:
Through all the hours of night until the dawn
They sleep, forgetting fear.

The hare sleeps where it lies,
With wary half-closed eyes;
The cock has ceased to crow, the hen to cluck:
Only the fox is out, some heedless duck
Or chicken to surprise.

Remote, each single star
Comes out, till there they are
All shining brightly. How the dews fall damp!
While close at hand the glow-worm lights her lamp,
Or twinkles from afar.

But evening now is done
As much as if the sun
Day-giving had arisen in the East—
For night has come; and the great calm has ceased,
The quiet sands have run.

TO WHAT PURPOSE IS THIS WASTE?

A WINDY shell singing upon the shore:
A lily budding in a desert place,
Blooming alone
With no companion
To praise its perfect perfume and its grace:
A rose crimson and blushing at the core,
Hedged-in with thorns behind it and before:
A fountain in the grass,
Whose shadowy waters pass
Only to nourish birds and furnish food
For squirrels of the wood:
An oak deep in the forest's heart, the house
Of black-eyed tiny mouse:
Its strong roots, fit for fuel, roofing in
The hoarded nuts, acorns, and grains of wheat—
Shutting them from the wind and scorching heat,
And sheltering them when the rains begin:

A precious pearl deep-buried in the sea
Where none save fishes be:
The fullest merriest note
For which the skylark strains his silver throat,
Heard only in the sky
By other birds that fitfully
Chase one another as they fly:
The ripest plum down-tumbled to the ground
By southern winds most musical of sound,
But by no thirsty traveller found:
Honey of wild bees in their ordered cells
Stored, not for human mouths to taste:—
I said smiling superior down: What waste
Of good, where no man dwells!

This I said on a pleasant day in June
Before the sun had set, though a white moon
  Already flaked the quiet blue
    Which not a star looked through.
But still the air was warm, and drowsily
    It blew into my face:
So, since that same day I had wandered deep
Into the country, I sought out a place
    For rest beneath a tree,
And very soon forgot myself in sleep:
Not so mine own words had forgotten me.
  Mine eyes were open to behold
      All hidden things,
And mine ears heard all secret whisperings;
  So my proud tongue, that had been bold
    To carp and to reprove,
Was silenced by the force of utter Love.

All voices of all things inanimate
Join with the song of Angels and the song
  Of blessed spirits, chiming with
Their Hallelujahs. One wind wakeneth
Across the sleeping sea, crisping along
  The waves, and brushes through the great
Forests and tangled hedges, and calls out
    Of rivers a clear sound,
And makes the ripe corn rustle on the ground,
    And murmurs in a shell:
    Till all their voices swell
  Above the clouds in one loud hymn
  Joining the song of Seraphim,
Or like pure incense circle round about
The walls of heaven, or like a well-spring rise
    In shady Paradise.

A lily blossoming unseen
Holds honey in its silver cup
Whereon a bee may sup,
Till being full she takes the rest
And stores it in her waxen nest:
While the fair blossom lifted up
On its one stately stem of green
Is type of her the Undefiled,
Arrayed in white, whose eyes are mild
As a white dove's, whose garment is
Blood-cleansed from all impurities
And earthly taints,
Her robe the righteousness of Saints.

And other eyes than ours
Were made to look on flowers,
Eyes of small birds and insects small:
The deep sun-blushing rose
Round which the prickles close
Opens her bosom to them all.
The tiniest living thing
That soars on feathered wing,
Or crawls among the long grass out of sight,
Has just as good a right
To its appointed portion of delight
As any King.

Why should we grudge a hidden water-stream
To birds and squirrels while we have enough?
As if a nightingale should cease to sing
Lest we should hear, or finch leafed out of sight
Warbling its fill in summer light:
As if sweet violets in the Spring
Should cease to blow, for fear our path should seem
Less weary or less rough.

So every oak that stands a house
For skilful mouse
And year by year renews its strength,
Shakes acorns from a hundred boughs
Which shall be oaks at length.

Who hath weighed the waters and shall say
What is hidden in the depths from day?
Pearls and precious stones and golden sands,
Wondrous weeds and blossoms rare,
Kept back from human hands,
But good and fair,
A silent praise as pain is silent prayer.
A hymn and incense rising toward the skies,
As our whole life should rise:
An offering without stint from earth below,
Which Love accepteth so.

Thus is it with a warbling bird
With fruit bloom-ripe and full of seed,
With honey which the wild bees draw
From flowers, and store for future need
By a perpetual law.
We want the faith that hath not seen
Indeed, but hath believed His truth
Who witnessed that His work was good:
So we pass cold to age from youth.
Alas for us, for we have heard
And known, but have not understood!

O earth, earth, earth, thou yet shalt bow
Who art so fair and lifted up,
Thou yet shalt drain the bitter cup.

Men's eyes that wait upon thee now,
All eyes shall see thee lost and mean,
Exposed and valued at thy worth,
While thou shalt stand ashamed and dumb.—
Ah when the Son of Man shall come,
Shall He find faith upon the earth?

CHILD'S TALK IN APRIL

I WISH you were a pleasant wren,
And I your small accepted mate;
How we'd look down on toilsome men!
We'd rise and go to bed at eight
Or it may be not quite so late.

Then you should see the nest I'd build,
The wondrous nest for you and me;
The outside rough perhaps, but filled
With wool and down; ah you should see
The cosy nest that it would be.

We'd have our change of hope and fear,
Small quarrels, reconcilements sweet:
I'd perch by you to chirp and cheer,
Or hop about on active feet,
And fetch you dainty bits to eat.

We'd be so happy by the day,
So safe and happy through the night,
We both should feel, and I should say,
It's all one season of delight,
And we'll make merry whilst we may.

Perhaps some day there'd be an egg
When spring had blossomed from the snow:
I'd stand triumphant on one leg;
Like chanticleer I'd almost crow
To let our little neighbours know.

Next you should sit and I would sing
Through lengthening days of sunny spring;
Till, if you wearied of the task,
I'd sit; and you should spread your wing
From bough to bough; I'd sit and bask.

Fancy the breaking of the shell,
The chirp, the chickens wet and bare,
The untried proud paternal swell;
And you with housewife-matron air
Enacting choicer bills of fare.

Fancy the embryo coats of down,
The gradual feathers soft and sleek;
Till clothed and strong from tail to crown,
With virgin warblings in their beak,
They too go forth to soar and seek.

So would it last an April through
And early summer fresh with dew,—
Then should we part and live as twain:
Love-time would bring me back to you,
And build our happy nest again.

A GREEN CORNFIELD

'And singing still dost soar and soaring ever singest.'

THE earth was green, the sky was blue:
I saw and heard one sunny morn
A skylark hang between the two,
A singing speck above the corn;

A stage below, in gay accord,
White butterflies danced on the wing,
And still the singing skylark soared,
And silent sank and soared to sing.

The cornfield stretched a tender green
To right and left beside my walks;
I knew he had a nest unseen
Somewhere among the million stalks.

And as I paused to hear his song
While swift the sunny moments slid,
Perhaps his mate sat listening long,
And listened longer than I did.

FREAKS OF FASHION

Such a hubbub in the nests,
Such a bustle and squeak!
Nestlings, guiltless of a feather,
Learning just to speak,
Ask—'And how about the fashions?'
From a cavernous beak.

Perched on bushes, perched on hedges,
Perched on firm hahas,
Perched on anything that holds them,
Gay papas and grave mammas
Teach the knowledge-thirsty nestlings:
Hear the gay papas.

Robin says: 'A scarlet waistcoat
Will be all the wear,
Snug, and also cheerful-looking
For the frostiest air,
Comfortable for the chest too
When one comes to plume and pair.

'Neat grey hoods will be in vogue,'
Quoth a Jackdaw: 'glossy grey,
Setting close, yet setting easy,
Nothing fly-away;
Suited to our misty mornings,
À la négligée.'

Flushing salmon, flushing sulphur,
Haughty Cockatoos
Answer—'Hoods may do for mornings,
But for evenings choose
High head-dresses curved like crescents,
Such as well-bred persons use.'

'Top-knots, yes; yet more essential
Still, a train or tail,'
Screamed the Peacock: 'gemmed and lustrous,
Not too stiff, and not too frail;
Those are best which rearrange as
Fans, and spread or trail.'

Spoke the Swan, entrenched behind
An inimitable neck:
'After all, there's nothing sweeter
For the lawn or lake
Than simple white, if fine and flaky
And absolutely free from speck.

'Yellow,' hinted a Canary,
'Warmer, not less *distingué*.'
'Peach colour,' put in a Lory,
'Cannot look *outré*.'
'All the colours are in fashion,
And are right,' the Parrots say.

'Very well. But do contrast
Tints harmonious,'
Piped a Blackbird, justly proud
Of bill aurigerous;
'Half the world may learn a lesson
As to that from us.'

Then a Stork took up the word:
'Aim at height and *chic*:
Not high heels, they're common; somehow,
Stilted legs, not thick,
Nor yet thin:' he just glanced downward
And snapped-to his beak.

Here a rustling and a whirring,
As of fans outspread,
Hinted that mammas felt anxious
Lest the next thing said
Might prove less than quite judicious,
Or even underbred.

So a mother Auk resumed
The broken thread of speech:
'Let colours sort themselves, my dears,
Yellow, or red, or peach;
The main points, as it seems to me,
We mothers have to teach,

'Are form and texture, elegance,
An air reserved, sublime;
The mode of wearing what we wear
With due regard to month and clime.
But now, let's all compose ourselves,
It's almost breakfast-time.'

A hubbub, a squeak, a bustle!
Who cares to chatter or sing
With delightful breakfast coming?
Yet they whisper under the wing:
'So we may wear whatever we like,
Anything, everything!'

SONG

Oh roses for the flush of youth,
And laurel for the perfect prime;
But pluck an ivy branch for me
Grown old before my time.

Oh violets for the grave of youth,
And bay for those dead in their prime;
Give me the withered leaves I chose
Before in the old time.

THREE SEASONS

'A cup for hope!' she said,
In springtime ere the bloom was old;
The crimson wine was poor and cold
By her mouth's richer red.

'A cup for love!' how low,
How soft the words; and all the while
Her blush was rippling with a smile
Like summer after snow.

'A cup for memory!'
Cold cup that one must drain alone:
While autumn winds are up and moan
Across the barren sea.

Hope, memory, love:
Hope for fair morn, and love for day,
And memory for the evening grey
And solitary dove.

SEASONS

In Springtime when the leaves are young.
Clear dewdrops gleam like jewels, hung
On boughs the fair birds roost among.

When Summer comes with sweet unrest,
Birds weary of their mother's breast,
And look abroad and leave the nest.

In Autumn ere the waters freeze,
The swallows fly across the seas:—
If we could fly away with these!

In Winter when the birds are gone,
The sun himself looks starved and wan,
And starved the snow he shines upon.

SEASONS

Crocuses and snowdrops wither,
Violets, primroses together,
Fading with the fading Spring
Before a fuller blossoming.

O sweet Summer, pass not soon,
Stay awhile the harvest-moon:
O sweetest Summer, do not go,
For Autumn's next and next the snow.

When Autumn comes the days are drear
It is the downfall of the year:
We heed the wind and falling leaf
More than the golden harvest-sheaf.

Dreary Winter come at last:
Come quickly, so be quickly past:
Dusk and sluggish Winter, wane
Till Spring and sunlight dawn again

THE FIRST SPRING DAY

I WONDER if the sap is stirring yet,
If wintry birds are dreaming of a mate,
If frozen snowdrops feel as yet the sun
And crocus fires are kindling one by one:
Sing, robin, sing;
I still am sore in doubt concerning Spring.

I wonder if the Springtide of this year
Will bring another Spring both lost and dear;
If heart and spirit will find out their Spring,
Or if the world alone will bud and sing:
Sing, hope, to me;
Sweet notes, my hope, soft notes for memory.

The sap will surely quicken soon or late,
The tardiest bird will twitter to a mate;
So Spring must dawn again with warmth and bloom,
Or in this world or in the world to come;
Sing, voice of Spring,
Till I too blossom and rejoice and sing.

MAY

I CANNOT tell you how it was;
But this I know: it came to pass—
Upon a bright and breezy day
When May was young, ah pleasant May!
As yet the poppies were not born
Between the blades of tender corn;
The last eggs had not hatched as yet,
Nor any bird forgone its mate.

I cannot tell you what it was;
But this I know: it did but pass.
It passed away with sunny May,
With all sweet things it passed away,
And left me old, and cold, and grey.

MAY

'SWEET Life is dead.'—'Not so:
I meet him day by day,
Where bluest fountains flow
And trees are white as snow,
For it is time of May.
Even now from long ago
He will not say me nay.
He is most fair to see:
And if I wander forth, I know
He wanders forth with me.'

'But Life is dead to me:
The worn-out year was failing,
West winds took up a wailing
To watch his funeral:
Bare poplars shivered tall
And lank vines stretched to see.
'Twixt him and me a wall
Was frozen of earth-like stone
With brambles overgrown:
Chill darkness wrapped him like a pall,
And I am left alone.'

'How can you call him dead?
He buds out everywhere:
In every hedgerow rank,
On every moss-grown bank,
I find him here and there.
He crowns my willing head
With May-flowers white and red,
He rears my tender heartsease-bed:
He makes my branch to bud and bear,
And blossoms where I tread.'

WINTER: MY SECRET

I TELL my secret? No indeed, not I:
Perhaps some day, who knows?
But not to-day; it froze, and blows, and snows,
And you're too curious: fie!
You want to hear it? well:
Only, my secret's mine, and I won't tell.

Or, after all, perhaps there's none:
Suppose there is no secret after all,
But only just my fun.
To-day's a nipping day, a biting day;
In which one wants a shawl,
A veil, a cloak, and other wraps:
I cannot ope to every one who taps,
And let the draughts come whistling through my hall;
Come bounding and surrounding me,
Come buffeting, astounding me,
Nipping and clipping through my wraps and all.

I wear my mask for warmth : who ever shows
His nose to Russian snows
To be pecked at by every wind that blows?
You would not peck? I thank you for good will,
Believe, but leave that truth untested still.

Spring's an expansive time : yet I don't trust
March with its peck of dust,
Nor April with its rainbow-crowned brief showers,
Nor even May, whose flowers
One frost may wither through the sunless hours.

Perhaps some languid summer day,
When drowsy birds sing less and less,
And golden fruit is ripening to excess,
If there's not too much sun nor too much cloud,
And the warm wind is neither still nor loud,
Perhaps my secret I may say,
Or you may guess.

AUTUMN

I DWELL alone—I dwell alone, alone,
Whilst full my river flows down to the sea
Gilded with flashing boats
That bring no friend to me :
O love-songs, gurgling from a hundred throats,
O love-pangs, let me be.

Fair fall the freighted boats which gold and stone
And spices bear to sea :

Slim gleaming maidens swell their mellow notes,
Love-promising, entreating—
Ah sweet but fleeting—
Beneath the shivering, snow-white sails.
Hush! the wind flags and fails—
Hush! they will lie becalmed in sight of strand—
Sight of my strand, where I do dwell alone;
Their songs wake singing echoes in my land—
They cannot hear me moan.

One latest, solitary swallow flies
Across the sea, rough autumn-tempest-tost:
Poor bird, shall it be lost?
Dropped down into this uncongenial sea,
With no kind eyes
To watch it while it dies,
Unguessed, uncared for, free:
Set free at last,
The short pang past,
In sleep, in death, in dreamless sleep locked fast.

Mine avenue is all a growth of oaks,
Some rent by thunder strokes,
Some rustling leaves and acorns in the breeze;
Fair fall my fertile trees,
That rear their goodly heads, and live at ease.

A spider's web blocks all mine avenue;
He catches down and foolish painted flies,
That spider wary and wise.
Each morn it hangs a rainbow strung with dew
Betwixt boughs green with sap,
So fair, few creatures guess it is a trap:
I will not mar the web,
Though sad I am to see the small lives ebb.

It shakes—my trees shake—for a wind is roused
In cavern where it housed :
Each white and quivering sail
Of boats among the water-leaves
Hollows and strains in the full-throated gale :
Each maiden sings again—
Each languid maiden, whom the calm
Had lulled to sleep with rest and spice and balm.
Miles down my river to the sea
They float and wane,
Long miles away from me.

Perhaps they say : 'She grieves,
Uplifted like a beaçon on her tower.'
Perhaps they say : 'One hour
More, and we dance among the golden sheaves.
Perhaps they say : 'One hour
More, and we stand,
Face to face, hand in hand ;
Make haste, O slack gale, to the looked-for land !'

My trees are not in flower,
I have no bower,
And gusty creaks my tower,
And lonesome, very lonesome, is my strand.

WINTER RAIN

Every valley drinks,
Every dell and hollow ;
Where the kind rain sinks and sinks,
Green of Spring will follow.

Yet a lapse of weeks—
  Buds will burst their edges,
Strip their wool-coats, glue-coats, streaks,
  In the woods and hedges;

Weave a bower of love
  For birds to meet each other,
Weave a canopy above
  Nest and egg and mother.

But for fattening rain
  We should have no flowers,
Never a bud or leaf again
  But for soaking showers;

Never a mated bird
  In the rocking tree-tops,
Never indeed a flock or herd
  To graze upon the lea-crops.

Lambs so woolly white,
  Sheep the sun-bright leas on,
They could have no grass to bite
  But for rain in season.

We should find no moss
  In the shadiest places,
Find no waving meadow grass
  Pied with broad-eyed daisies:

But miles of barren sand,
  With never a son or daughter;
Not a lily on the land,
  Or lily on the water.

SPRING

Frost-locked all the winter,
Seeds, and roots, and stones of fruits,
What shall make their sap ascend
That they may put forth shoots?
Tips of tender green,
Leaf, or blade, or sheath;
Telling of the hidden life
That breaks forth underneath,
Life nursed in its grave by Death

Blows the thaw-wind pleasantly,
Drips the soaking rain,
By fits looks down the waking sun:
Young grass springs on the plain;
Young leaves clothe early hedgerow trees;
Seeds, and roots, and stones of fruits,
Swoln with sap put forth their shoots;
Curled-headed ferns sprout in the lane;
Birds sing and pair again.

There is no time like Spring,
When life's alive in everything,
Before new nestlings sing,
Before cleft swallows speed their journey back
Along the trackless track—
God guides their wing,
He spreads their table that they nothing lack,—
Before the daisy grows a common flower,
Before the sun has power
To scorch the world up in his noontide hour.

There is no time like Spring,
Like Spring that passes by;
There is no life like Spring-life born to die,—
Piercing the sod,
Clothing the uncouth clod,
Hatched in the nest,
Fledged on the windy bough,
Strong on the wing:
There is no time like Spring that passes by,
Now newly born, and now
Hastening to die.

JUNE

Come, cuckoo, come:
Come again, swift swallow:
Come and welcome! when you come
Summer's sure to follow:
June the month of months
Flowers and fruitage brings too,
When green trees spread shadiest boughs,
When each wild bird sings too.

May is scant and crude,
Generous June is riper:
Birds fall silent in July,
June has its woodland piper:
Rocks upon the maple-tops
Homely-hearted linnet,
Full in hearing of his nest
And the dear ones in it.

If the year would stand
Still at June for ever,
With no further growth on land
Nor further flow of river,
If all nights were shortest nights
And longest days were all the seven,
This might be a merrier world
To my mind to live in.

A YEAR'S WINDFALLS

On the wind of January
Down flits the snow,
Travelling from the frozen North
As cold as it can blow.
Poor robin redbreast,
Look where he comes;
Let him in to feel your fire,
And toss him of your crumbs.

On the wind in February
Snowflakes float still,
Half inclined to turn to rain,
Nipping, dripping, chill.
Then the thaws swell the streams,
And swollen rivers swell the sea:
If the winter ever ends,
How pleasant it will be!

In the wind of windy March
The catkins drop down,
Curly, caterpillar-like,
Curious green and brown.

With concourse of nest-building birds
And leaf-buds by the way,
We begin to think of flowers
And life and nuts some day.

With the gusts of April
Rich fruit-tree blossoms fall,
On the hedged-in orchard-green,
From the southern wall.
Apple-trees and pear-trees
Shed petals white or pink,
Plum-trees and peach-trees ;
While sharp showers sink and sink.

Little brings the May breeze
Beside pure scent of flowers,
While all things wax and nothing wanes
In lengthening daylight hours.
Across the hyacinth beds
The wind lags warm and sweet,
Across the hawthorn tops,
Across the blades of wheat.

In the wind of sunny June
Thrives the red rose crop,
Every day fresh blossoms blow
While the first leaves drop ;
White rose and yellow rose
And moss rose choice to find,
And the cottage cabbage-rose
Not one whit behind.

On the blast of scorched July
Drives the pelting hail
From thunderous lightning-clouds that blot
Blue heaven grown lurid-pale.
Weedy waves are tossed ashore ;
Sea-things strange to sight
Gasp upon the barren shore
And fade away in light.

In the parching August wind
Corn-fields bow the head,
Sheltered in round valley depths,
On low hills outspread.
Early leaves drop loitering down
Weightless on the breeze,
First fruits of the year's decay
From the withering trees.

In brisk wind of September
The heavy-headed fruits
Shake upon their bending boughs
And drop from the shoots ;
Some glow golden in the sun,
Some show green and streaked,
Some set forth a purple bloom,
Some blush rosy-cheeked.

In strong blast of October
At the equinox,
Stirred up in his hollow bed
Broad ocean rocks ;
Plunge the ships on his bosom,
Leaps and plunges the foam,—
It's oh for mothers' sons at sea,
That they were safe at home :

In slack wind of November
The fog forms and shifts;
All the world comes out again
When the fog lifts.
Loosened from their sapless twigs,
Leaves drop with every gust;
Drifting, rustling, out of sight
In the damp or dust.

Last of all, December,
The year's sands nearly run,
Speeds on the shortest day,
Curtails the sun;
With its bleak raw wind
Lays the last leaves low,
Brings back the nightly frosts,
Brings back the snow.

AUTUMN VIOLETS

KEEP love for youth, and violets for the spring:
Or if these bloom when worn-out autumn grieves
Let them lie hid in double shade of leaves,
Their own, and others' dropped down withering;
For violets suit when home birds build and sing,
Not when the outbound bird a passage cleaves;
Not with dry stubble of mown harvest sheaves,
But when the green world buds to blossoming.
Keep violets for the spring, and love for youth,
Love that should dwell with beauty, mirth, and hope:
Or if a later sadder love be born,
Let this not look for grace beyond its scope,
But give itself, nor plead for answering truth—
A grateful Ruth tho' gleaning scanty corn.

HAREBELL, ROSE, LILY

Hope is like a harebell trembling from its birth,
Love is like a rose the joy of all the earth ;
Faith is like a lily lifted high and white,
Love is like a lovely rose the world's delight ;
Harebells and sweet lilies show a thornless growth,
But the rose with all its thorns excels them both.

AN OCTOBER GARDEN

In my Autumn garden I was fain
To mourn among my scattered roses ;
Alas for that last rosebud which uncloses
To Autumn's languid sun and rain
When all the world is on the wane !
Which has not felt the sweet constraint of June,
Nor heard the nightingale in tune.

Broad-faced asters by my garden walk,
You are but coarse compared with roses :
More choice, more dear that rosebud which uncloses,
Faint-scented, pinched, upon its stalk,
That least and last which cold winds balk :
A rose it is though least and last of all,
A rose to me though at the fall.

A WINTRY SONNET

A ROBIN said: 'The Spring will never come,
And I shall never care to build again.'
A Rosebush said: 'These frosts are wearisome,
My sap will never stir for sun or rain.'
The half Moon said: 'These nights are fogged and slow,
I neither care to wax nor care to wane.'
The Ocean said: 'I thirst from long ago,
Because earth's rivers cannot fill the main.—'
When Springtime came, red Robin built a nest,
And trilled a lover's song in sheer delight.
Grey hoarfrost vanished, and the Rose with might
Clothed her in leaves and buds of crimson core.
The dim Moon brightened. Ocean sunned his crest,
Dimpled his blue, yet thirsted evermore.

AN END

LOVE, strong as Death, is dead.
Come, let us make his bed
Among the dying flowers:
A green turf at his head;
And a stone at his feet,
Whereon we may sit
In the quiet evening hours.

He was born in the spring,
And died before the harvesting:
On the last warm summer day
He left us; he would not stay
For autumn twilight cold and grey.
Sit we by his grave, and sing
He is gone away.

To few chords and sad and low
Sing we so:
Be our eyes fixed on the grass
Shadow-veiled as the years pass,
While we think of all that was
In the long ago.

WITHERING

Fade, tender lily,
Fade, O crimson rose,
Fade every flower,
Sweetest flower that blows.

Go, chilly autumn,
Come, O winter cold;
Let the green stalks die away
Into common mould.

Birth follows hard on death,
Life on withering:
Hasten, we will come the sooner
Back to pleasant spring.

A WISH

I WISH I were a little bird
That out of sight doth soar;
I wish I were a song once heard
But often pondered o'er,
Or shadow of a lily stirred
By wind upon the floor,
Or echo of a loving word
Worth all that went before,
Or memory of a hope deferred
That springs again no more.

A SOUL

SHE stands as pale as Parian statues stand;
Like Cleopatra when she turned at bay,
And felt her strength above the Roman sway,
And felt the aspic writhing in her hand.
Her face is steadfast toward the shadowy land,
For dim beyond it looms the land of day:
Her feet are steadfast, all the arduous way
That foot-track doth not waver on the sand.
She stands there like a beacon through the night,
A pale clear beacon where the storm-drift is—
She stands alone, a wonder deathly-white:
She stands there patient nerved with inner might,
Indomitable in her feebleness,
Her face and will athirst against the light.

DREAM-LOVE

YOUNG Love lies sleeping
In May-time of the year,
Among the lilies,
Lapped in the tender light:
White lambs come grazing,
White doves come building there:
And round about him
The May-bushes are white.

Soft moss the pillow
For oh a softer cheek;
Broad leaves cast shadow
Upon the heavy eyes:
There winds and waters
Grow lulled and scarcely speak;
There twilight lingers
The longest in the skies.

Young Love lies dreaming;
But who shall tell the dream?
A perfect sunlight
On rustling forest tips;
Or perfect moonlight
Upon a rippling stream
Or perfect silence,
Or song of cherished lips.

Burn odours round him
To fill the drowsy air;
Weave silent dances
Around him to and fro;

For oh in waking
  The sights are not so fair,
And song and silence
  Are not like these below.

Young Love lies dreaming
  Till summer days are gone,—
Dreaming and drowsing
  Away to perfect sleep:
He sees the beauty
  Sun hath not looked upon,
And tastes the fountain
  Unutterably deep.

Him perfect music
  Doth hush unto his rest,
And through the pauses
  The perfect silence calms:
Oh poor the voices
  Of earth from east to west,
And poor earth's stillness
  Between her stately palms!

Young Love lies drowsing
  Away to poppied death;
Cool shadows deepen
  Across the sleeping face:
So fails the summer
  With warm delicious breath;
And what hath autumn
  To give us in its place?

Draw close the curtains
  Of branchèd evergreen;
Change cannot touch them
  With fading fingers sere:

Here the first violets
Perhaps will bud unseen,
And a dove, may be,
Return to nestle here.

FROM THE ANTIQUE

It's a weary life, it is, she said:—
Doubly blank in a woman's lot:
I wish and I wish I were a man:
Or, better than any being, were not:

Were nothing at all in all the world,
Not a body and not a soul:
Not so much as a grain of dust
Or drop of water from pole to pole.

Still the world would wag on the same,
Still the seasons go and come:
Blossoms bloom as in days of old,
Cherries ripen and wild bees hum.

None would miss me in all the world,
How much less would care or weep:
I should be nothing, while all the rest
Would wake and weary and fall asleep.

ECHO

Come to me in the silence of the night;
Come in the speaking silence of a dream;
Come with soft rounded cheeks and eyes as bright
As sunlight on a stream;
Come back in tears,
O memory, hope, love of finished years.

O dream how sweet, too sweet, too bitter sweet,
Whose wakening should have been in Paradise,
Where souls brimfull of love abide and meet;
Where thirsting longing eyes
Watch the slow door
That opening, letting in, lets out no more.

Yet come to me in dreams, that I may live
My very life again though cold in death:
Come back to me in dreams, that I may give
Pulse for pulse, breath for breath:
Speak low, lean low,
As long ago, my love, how long ago.

COBWEBS

It is a land with neither night nor day,
Nor heat nor cold, nor any wind nor rain,
Nor hills nor valleys: but one even plain
Stretches through long unbroken miles away,
While through the sluggish air a twilight grey
Broodeth: no moons or seasons wax and wane,
No ebb and flow are there along the main,
No bud-time, no leaf-falling, there for aye:—
No ripple on the sea, no shifting sand,
No beat of wings to stir the stagnant space:
No pulse of life through all the loveless land
And loveless sea; no trace of days before,
No guarded home, no toil-won resting-place,
No future hope, no fear for evermore.

LET PATIENCE HAVE HER PERFECT WORK

I saw a bird alone,
In its nest it sat alone,
For its mate was dead or flown
Though it was early Spring.
Hard by were buds half-blown,
With cornfields freshly sown:
It could only perch and moan
That used to sing:
Droop in sorrow left alone:
A sad sad thing.

I saw a star alone,
In blue heaven it hung alone,
A solitary throne
In the waste of space:
Where no moon-glories are,
Where not a second star
Beams through night from near or far
To that lone place.
Its beauties all unknown,
Its glories all alone,
Sad in heaven's face.

Doth the bird desire a mate,
Pine for a second mate,
Whose first joy was so great
With its own dove?
Doth the star supreme in night
Desire a second light
To make it seem less bright
In the shrine of heavenly height
That is above?—

Ah better wait alone,
In nest or heaven alone,
Forsaken or unknown:
Till, time being past and gone,
Full eternity rolls on,
While patience reaps what it has sown
In the harvest-land of love.

A TRIAD

THREE sang of love together: one with lips
Crimson, with cheeks and bosom in a glow,
Flushed to the yellow hair and finger-tips;
And one there sang who soft and smooth as snow
Bloomed like a tinted hyacinth at a show;
And one was blue with famine after love,
Who like a harpstring snapped rang harsh and low
The burden of what those were singing of.
One shamed herself in love; one temperately
Grew gross in soulless love, a sluggish wife;
One famished died for love. Thus two of three
Took death for love and won him after strife;
One droned in sweetness like a fattened bee:
All on the threshold, yet all short of life.

IN AN ARTIST'S STUDIO

ONE face looks out from all his canvases,
One selfsame figure sits or walks or leans:
We found her hidden just behind those screens,
That mirror gave back all her loveliness.
A queen in opal or in ruby dress,
A nameless girl in freshest summer-greens,
A saint, an angel—every canvas means
The same one meaning, neither more nor less.

He feeds upon her face by day and night,
And she with true kind eyes looks back on him,
Fair as the moon and joyful as the light:
Not wan with waiting, not with sorrow dim;
Not as she is, but was when hope shone bright;
Not as she is, but as she fills his dream.

A BIRTHDAY

My heart is like a singing bird
Whose nest is in a watered shoot:
My heart is like an apple-tree
Whose boughs are bent with thickset fruit;
My heart is like a rainbow shell
That paddles in a halcyon sea;
My heart is gladder than all these
Because my love is come to me.

Raise me a dais of silk and down;
Hang it with vair and purple dyes;
Carve it in doves and pomegranates,
And peacocks with a hundred eyes;
Work it in gold and silver grapes,
In leaves and silver fleurs-de-lys;
Because the birthday of my life
Is come, my love is come to me.

WIFE TO HUSBAND

Pardon the faults in me,
For the love of years ago:
Good-bye.
I must drift across the sea,
I must sink into the snow,
I must die.

You can bask in this sun,
You can drink wine, and eat:
Good-bye.
I must gird myself and run,
Though with unready feet:
I must die.

Blank sea to sail upon,
Cold bed to sleep in:
Good-bye.
While you clasp, I must be gone
For all your weeping:
I must die.

A kiss for one friend,
And a word for two,—
Good-bye:—
A lock that you must send,
A kindness you must do:
I must die.

Not a word for you,
Not a lock or kiss,
Good-bye.
We, one, must part in two;
Verily death is this:
I must die.

IN PROGRESS

TEN years ago it seemed impossible
That she should ever grow so calm as this,
With self-remembrance in her warmest kiss
And dim dried eyes like an exhausted well.
Slow-speaking when she has some fact to tell,
Silent with long-unbroken silences,
Centred in self yet not unpleased to please,
Gravely monotonous like a passing bell.
Mindful of drudging daily common things,
Patient at pastime, patient at her work,
Wearied perhaps but strenuous certainly.
Sometimes I fancy we may one day see
Her head shoot forth seven stars from where they lurk,
And her eyes lightnings and her shoulders wings.

ON THE WING

ONCE in a dream (for once I dreamed of you)
We stood together in an open field;
Above our heads two swift-winged pigeons wheeled,
Sporting at ease and courting full in view:—
When loftier still a broadening darkness flew,
Down-swooping, and a ravenous hawk revealed;
Too weak to fight, too fond to fly, they yield;
So farewell life and love and pleasures new.
Then as their plumes fell fluttering to the ground,
Their snow-white plumage flecked with crimson drops,
I wept, and thought I turned towards you to weep:
But you were gone; while rustling hedgerow tops
Bent in a wind which bore to me a sound
Of far-off piteous bleat of lambs and sheep.

A DUMB FRIEND

I PLANTED a young tree when I was young:
But now the tree is grown and I am old:
There wintry robin shelters from the cold
And tunes his silver tongue.

A green and living tree I planted it,
A glossy-foliaged tree of evergreen:
All through the noontide heat it spread a screen
Whereunder I might sit.

But now I only watch it where it towers:
I, sitting at my window, watch it tost
By rattling gale or silvered by the frost;
Or, when sweet summer flowers,

Wagging its round green head with stately grace
In tender winds that kiss it and go by.
It shows a green full age: and what show I?
A faded wrinkled face.

So often have I watched it, till mine eyes
Have filled with tears and I have ceased to see,
That now it seems a very friend to me,
In all my secrets wise.

A faithful pleasant friend, who year by year
Grew with my growth and strengthened with my strength,
But whose green lifetime shows a longer length:
When I shall not sit here

It still will bud in spring, and shed rare leaves
In autumn, and in summer-heat give shade,
And warmth in winter: when my bed is made
In shade the cypress weaves.

MEETING

If we shall live, we live :
If we shall die, we die :
If we live we shall meet again :
But to-night, good-bye.
One word, let but one be heard—
What, not one word ?

If we sleep we shall wake again
And see to-morrow's light :
If we wake, we shall meet again :
But to-night. good-night.
Good-night, my lost and found—
Still not a sound ?

If we live, we must part :
If we die, we part in pain :
If we die, we shall part
Only to meet again.
By those tears on either cheek,
To-morrow you will speak.

To meet, worth living for :
Worth dying for, to meet.
To meet, worth parting for :
Bitter forgot in sweet.
To meet, worth parting before,
Never to part more.

GROWN AND FLOWN

I LOVED my love from green of Spring
  Until sere Autumn's fall;
But now that leaves are withering
  How should one love at all?
  One heart's too small
For hunger, cold, love, everything.

I loved my love on sunny days
  Until late Summer's wane;
But now that frost begins to glaze
  How should one love again?
  Nay, love and pain
Walk wide apart in diverse ways.

I loved my love—alas to see
  That this should be, alas!
I thought that this could scarcely be,
  Yet has it come to pass:
  Sweet sweet love was,
Now bitter bitter grown to me.

FROM SUNSET TO STAR RISE

Go from me, summer friends, and tarry not:
I am no summer friend, but wintry cold;
A silly sheep benighted from the fold,
A sluggard with a thorn-choked garden plot.
Take counsel, sever from my lot your lot,
Dwell in your pleasant places, hoard your gold;
Lest you with me should shiver on the wold,
Athirst and hungering on a barren spot.
For I have hedged me with a thorny hedge,
I live alone, I look to die alone.
Yet sometimes when a wind sighs through the sedge
Ghosts of my buried years and friends come back,
My heart goes sighing after swallows flown
On sometime summer's unreturning track.

THE GERMAN-FRENCH CAMPAIGN

1870-1871

I

THY BROTHER'S BLOOD CRIETH

All her corn-fields rippled in the sunshine,
All her lovely vines, sweets-laden, bowed;
Yet some weeks to harvest and to vintage:
When, as one man's hand, a cloud
Rose and spread, and, blackening, burst asunder
In rain and fire and thunder.

Is there nought to reap in the day of harvest?
Hath the vine in her day no fruit to yield?
Yea, men tread the press, but nor for sweetness,
And they reap a red crop from the field.
Build barns, ye reapers, garner all aright,
Though your souls be called to-night.

A cry of tears goes up from blackened homesteads,
A cry of blood goes up from reeking earth:
Tears and blood have a cry that pierces Heaven
Through all its Hallelujah swells of mirth;
God hears their cry, and though He tarry, yet
He doth not forget.

Mournful Mother, prone in dust and weeping,
Who shall comfort thee for those who are not?
As thou didst, men do to thee; and heap the measure
And heat the furnace sevenfold hot:
As thou once, now these to thee—who pitieth thee
From sea to sea?

O thou King, terrible in strength, and building
Thy strong future on thy past!
Though he drink the last, the King of Sheshach,
Yet he shall drink at the last.
Art thou greater than great Babylon,
Which lies overthrown?

Take heed, ye unwise among the people;
O ye fools, when will ye understand?—
He that planted the ear shall He not hear,
Nor He smite who formed the hand?
'Vengeance is Mine, is Mine,' thus saith the Lord:
O Man, put up thy sword.

2

'TO-DAY FOR ME'

SHE sitteth still who used to dance,
She weepeth sore and more and more:—
Let us sit with thee weeping sore,
O fair France.

She trembleth as the days advance
Who used to be so light of heart:—
We in thy trembling bear a part,
Sister France.

Her eyes shine tearful as they glance:
'Who shall give back my slaughtered sons?
'Bind up,' she saith, 'my wounded ones.'—
Alas, France!

She struggles in a deathly trance,
As in a dream her pulses stir,
She hears the nations calling her,
'France, France, France!'

Thou people of the lifted lance,
Forbear her tears, forbear her blood;
Roll back, roll back, thy whelming flood
Back from France.

Eye not her loveliness askance,
Forge not for her a galling chain:
Leave her at peace to bloom again,
Vine-clad France.

A time there is for change and chance,
A time for passing of the cup:
And One abides can yet bind up
Broken France.

A time there is for change and chance:
Who next shall drink the trembling cup,
Wring out its dregs and suck them up
After France?

VENUS'S LOOKING-GLASS

I MARKED where lovely Venus and her court
With song and dance and merry laugh went by;
Weightless, their wingless feet seemed made to fly,
Bound from the ground, and in mid air to sport.
Left far behind I heard the dolphins snort,
Tracking their goddess with a wistful eye,
Around whose head white doves rose, wheeling high
Or low, and cooed after their tender sort.
All this I saw in Spring. Through summer heat
I saw the lovely Queen of Love no more.
But when flushed Autumn through the woodlands went
I spied sweet Venus walk amid the wheat:
Whom seeing, every harvester gave o'er
His toil, and laught and hoped and was content.

I DUG AND DUG

I DUG and dug amongst the snow,
And thought the flowers would never grow;
I dug and dug amongst the sand,
And still no green thing came to hand.

Melt, O snow! the warm winds blow
To thaw the flowers and melt the snow;
But all the winds from every land
Will rear no blossom from the sand.

SEA-SAND AND SORROW

WHAT are heavy? sea-sand and sorrow:
What are brief? to-day and to-morrow:
What are frail? Spring blossoms and youth:
What are deep? the ocean and truth.

WIND-FLOWERS

'TWIST me a crown of wind-flowers;
That I may fly away
To hear the singers at their song,
And players at their play.'

'Put on your crown of wind-flowers:
But whither would you go?'
'Beyond the surging of the sea
And the storms that blow.'

'Alas! your crown of wind-flowers
Can never make you fly:
I twist them in a crown to-day,
And to-night they die.'

ALICE

DANCING on the hill-tops,
Singing in the valleys,
Laughing with the echoes,
Merry little Alice.

Playing games with lambkins
In the flowering valleys,
Gathering pretty posies,
Helpful little Alice.

If her father's cottage
Turned into a palace,
And he owned the hill-tops
And the flowering valleys,
She'd be none the happier,
Happy little Alice.

SISTERS

SING me a song.—
What shall I sing?—
Three merry sisters
Dancing in a ring,
Light and fleet upon their feet
As birds upon the wing.

Tell me a tale.—
What shall I tell?—
Two mournful sisters,
And a tolling knell,
Tolling ding and tolling dong
Ding dong bell.

WIND

THE wind has such a rainy sound
  Moaning through the town,
The sea has such a windy sound,—
  Will the ships go down?

The apples in the orchard
  Tumble from their tree.—
Oh will the ships go down, go down,
  In the windy sea?

WINIFRED

ROSY maiden Winifred,
With a milkpail on her head,
Tripping through the corn,
  While the dew lies on the wheat
In the sunny morn.
Scarlet shepherd's-weatherglass
  Spreads wide open at her feet
    As they pass;
Cornflowers give their almond smell
  While she brushes by,
  And a lark sings from the sky
    'All is well.'

EMBLEM FLOWERS

Roses blushing red and white,
For delight;
Honeysuckle wreaths above,
For love;
Dim sweet-scented heliotrope,
For hope;
Shining lilies tall and straight,
For royal state;
Dusky pansies, let them be
For memory;
With violets of fragrant breath,
For death.

CORAL

'O sailor, come ashore,
What have you brought for me?
'Red coral, white coral,
Coral from the sea.

'I did not dig it from the ground,
Nor pluck it from a tree;
Feeble insects made it
In the stormy sea.'

A MOON-TRACK

Is the moon tired? she looks so pale
Within her misty veil:
She scales the sky from east to west,
And takes no rest.

Before the coming of the night
The moon shows papery white;
Before the dawning of the day
She fades away.

GOOD-BYE

'GOOD-BYE in fear, good-bye in sorrow,
Good-bye, and all in vain,
Never to meet again, my dear'—
'Never to part again.'
'Good-bye to-day, good-bye to-morrow
Good-bye till earth shall wane,
Never to meet again, my dear'—
'Never to part again.'

BABY ASLEEP

'BABY lies so fast asleep
That we cannot wake her:
Will the Angels clad in white
Fly from heaven to take her?'

'Baby lies so fast asleep
That no pain can grieve her;
Put a snowdrop in her hand,
Kiss her once and leave her.'

DEATH-WATCHES

THE Spring spreads one green lap of flowers
Which Autumn buries at the fall,
No chilling showers of Autumn hours
Can stay them or recall;
Winds sing a dirge, while earth lays out of sight
Her garment of delight.

The cloven East brings forth the sun,
The cloven West doth bury him
What time his gorgeous race is run
And all the world grows dim;
A funeral moon is lit in heaven's hollow,
And pale the star-lights follow.

FLUTTERED WINGS

THE splendour of the kindling day,
The splendour of the setting sun,
These move my soul to wend its way,
And have done
With all we grasp and toil amongst and say.

The paling roses of a cloud.
The fading bow that arches space,
These woo my fancy toward my shroud;
Toward the place
Of faces veiled, and heads discrowned and bowed.

The nation of the steadfast stars,
The wandering star whose blaze is brief,
These make me beat against the bars
Of my grief;
My tedious grief, twin to the life it mars.

O fretted heart tossed to and fro,
So fain to flee, so fain to rest!
All glories that are high or low,
East or west,
Grow dim to thee who art so fain to go.

RESURGAM

From depth to height, from height to loftier height,
The climber sets his foot and sets his face,
Tracks lingering sunbeams to their halting-place,
And counts the last pulsations of the light.
Strenuous thro' day and unsurprised by night
He runs a race with Time and wins the race,
Emptied and stripped of all save only Grace,
Will, Love, a threefold panoply of might.
Darkness descends for light he toiled to seek:
He stumbles on the darkened mountain-head,
Left breathless in the unbreathable thin air,
Made freeman of the living and the dead:—
He wots not he has topped the topmost peak,
But the returning sun will find him there.

LATER LIFE: A DOUBLE SONNET OF SONNETS

1

Before the mountains were brought forth, before
  Earth and the world were made, then God was God:
And God will still be God when flames shall roar
  Round earth and heaven dissolving at His nod:
  And this God is our God, even while His rod
Of righteous wrath falls on us smiting sore:
And this God is our God for evermore,
  Through life, through death, while clod returns to clod.
For though He slay us we will trust in Him;
  We will flock home to Him by divers ways:
  Yea, though He slay us we will vaunt His praise,
Serving and loving with the Cherubim,
Watching and loving with the Seraphim,
  Our very selves His praise through endless days.

2

Rend hearts and rend not garments for our sins;
  Gird sackcloth not on body but on soul;
  Grovel in dust with faces toward the goal
Nor won nor neared: he only laughs who wins.
Not neared the goal, the race too late begins;
  All left undone, we have yet to do the whole;
  The sun is hurrying west and toward the pole
Where darkness waits for earth with all her kins.

Let us to-day while it is called to-day
  Set out, if utmost speed may yet avail—
  The shadows lengthen and the light grows pale:
  For who through darkness and the shadow of death,
Darkness that may be felt, shall find a way,
  Blind-eyed, deaf-eared, and choked with failing breath?

3

Thou Who didst make and knowest whereof we are made,
  Oh bear in mind our dust and nothingness,
  Our wordless tearless numbness of distress:
Bear Thou in mind the burden Thou hast laid
Upon us, and our feebleness unstayed
  Except Thou stay us: for the long long race
  Which stretches far and far before our face
Thou knowest,—remember Thou whereof we are made
If making makes us Thine then Thine we are,
  And if redemption we are twice Thine own:
If once Thou didst come down from heaven afar
To seek us and to find us, how not save?
  Comfort us, save us, leave us not alone,
Thou Who didst die our death and fill our grave.

4

So tired am I, so weary of to-day,
  So unrefreshed from foregone weariness,
  So overburdened by foreseen distress,
So lagging and so stumbling on my way,
I scarce can rouse myself to watch or pray,
  To hope, or aim, or toil for more or less,—
  Ah always less and less, even while I press
Forward and toil and aim as best I may.

Half-starved of soul and heartsick utterly,
Yet lift I up my heart and soul and eyes
(Which fail in looking upward) toward the prize:
Me, Lord, Thou seest though I see not Thee;
Me now, as once the Thief in Paradise,
Even me, O Lord my Lord, remember me.

5

Lord, Thou Thyself art Love and only Thou;
Yet I who am not love would fain love Thee;
But Thou alone being Love canst furnish me
With that same love my heart is craving now.
Allow my plea! for if Thou disallow,
No second fountain can I find but Thee;
No second hope or help is left to me,
No second anything, but only Thou.
O Love, accept, according my request;
O Love, exhaust, fulfilling my desire:
Uphold me with the strength that cannot tire,
Nerve me to labour till Thou bid me rest,
Kindle my fire from Thine unkindled fire,
And charm the willing heart from out my breast.

6

We lack, yet cannot fix upon the lack:
Not this, nor that; yet somewhat, certainly.
We see the things we do not yearn to see
Around us: and what see we glancing back?
Lost hopes that leave our hearts upon the rack,
Hopes that were never ours yet seemed to be,
For which we steered on life's salt stormy sea,
Braving the sunstroke and the frozen pack.

If thus to look behind is all in vain,
And all in vain to look to left or right,
Why face we not our future once again,
Launching with hardier hearts across the main,
Straining dim eyes to catch the invisible sight,
And strong to bear ourselves in patient pain?

7

To love and to remember; that is good:
To love and to forget; that is not well:
To lapse from love to hatred; that is hell
And death and torment, rightly understood.
Soul dazed by love and sorrow, cheer thy mood;
More blest art thou than mortal tongue can tell:
Ring not thy funeral but thy marriage bell,
And salt with hope thy life's insipid food.
Love is the goal, love is the way we wend,
Love is our parallel unending line
Whose only perfect Parallel is Christ,
Beginning not begun, End without end:
For He Who hath the Heart of God sufficed
Can satisfy all hearts,—yea, thine and mine.

8

We feel and see with different hearts and eyes:—
Ah Christ, if all our hearts could meet in Thee,
How well it were for them and well for me,
Our hearts Thy dear accepted sacrifice.
Thou, only Life of hearts and Light of eyes,
Our life, our light, if once we turn to Thee,
So be it, O Lord, to them and so to me;
Be all alike Thine own dear sacrifice.

Thou Who by death hast ransomed us from death,
Thyself God's sole well-pleasing Sacrifice,
Thine only sacred Self I plead with Thee:
Make Thou it well for them and well for me
That Thou hast given us souls and wills and breath,
And hearts to love Thee, and to see Thine eyes.

9

Star Sirius and the Pole Star dwell afar
Beyond the drawings each of other's strength.
One blazes through the brief bright summer's length,
Lavishing life-heat from a flaming car;
While one unchangeable upon a throne
Broods o'er the frozen heart of earth alone,
Content to reign the bright particular star
Of some who wander or of some who groan.
They own no drawings each of other's strength,
Nor vibrate in a visible sympathy,
Nor veer along their courses each toward each:
Yet are their orbits pitched in harmony
Of one dear heaven, across whose depth and length
Mayhap they talk together without speech.

10

Tread softly! all the earth is holy ground.
It may be, could we look with seeing eyes,
This spot we stand on is a Paradise
Where dead have come to life and lost been found,
Where Faith has triumphed, Martyrdom been crowned,
Where fools have foiled the wisdom of the wise;
From this same spot the dust of saints may rise,
And the King's prisoners come to light unbound.
O earth, earth, earth, hear thou thy Maker's Word:
'Thy dead thou shalt give up, nor hide thy slain.

Some who went weeping forth shall come again
Rejoicing from the east or from the west,
As doves fly to their windows, love's own bird
Contented and desirous to the nest.[1]

11

Lifelong our stumbles, lifelong our regret,
Lifelong our efforts failing and renewed,
While lifelong is our witness 'God is good,'
Who bore with us till now, bears with us yet,
Who still remembers and will not forget,
Who gives us light and warmth and daily food;
And gracious promises half understood,
And glories half unveiled, whereon to set
Our heart of hearts and eyes of our desire;
Uplifting us to longing and to love,
Luring us upward from this world of mire,
Urging us to press on and mount above
Ourselves and all we have had experience of,
Mounting to Him in love's perpetual fire.

12

A dream there is wherein we are fain to scream,
While struggling with ourselves we cannot speak:
And much of all our waking life, as weak
And misconceived, eludes us like the dream.
For half life's seemings are not what they seem,
And vain the laughs we laugh, the shrieks we shriek;
Yea, all is vain that mars the settled meek
Contented quiet of our daily theme.

[1] Quali colombe dal disio chiamate
Con l'ali aperte e ferme al dolce nido
Volan per l'aer dal voler portate.'
DANTE.

When I was young I deemed that sweets are sweet :
  But now I deem some searching bitters are
  Sweeter than sweets, and more refreshing far,
  And to be relished more, and more desired,
And more to be pursued on eager feet,
  On feet untired, and still on feet though tired.

13

Shame is a shadow cast by sin : yet shame
  Itself may be a glory and a grace,
  Refashioning the sin-disfashioned face ;
A nobler bruit than hollow-sounded fame,
A new-lit lustre on a tarnished name,
  One virtue pent within an evil place,
  Strength for the fight, and swiftness for the race,
A stinging salve, a life-requickening flame.
A salve so searching we may scarcely live,
  A flame so fierce it seems that we must die,
    An actual cautery thrust into the heart :
    Nevertheless, men die not of such smart ;
And shame gives back what nothing else can give,
  Man to himself,—then sets him up on high.

14

When Adam and when Eve left Paradise,
  Did they love on and cling together still,
  Forgiving one another all that ill
The twain had wrought on such a different wise?
She propped upon his strength, and he in guise
  Of lover though of lord, girt to fulfil
  Their term of life and die when God should will ;
Lie down and sleep, and having slept arise.
Boast not against us, O our enemy !
  To-day we fall, but we shall rise again ;

We grope to-day, to-morrow we shall see :
What is to-day that we should fear to-day ?
A morrow cometh which shall sweep away
Thee and thy realm of change and death and pain.

15

Let women fear to teach and bear to learn,
Remembering the first woman's first mistake.
Eve had for pupil the inquiring snake,
Whose doubts she answered on a great concern ;
But he the tables so contrived to turn,
It next was his to give and hers to take ;
Till man deemed poison sweet for her sweet sake,
And fired a train by which the world must burn.
Did Adam love his Eve from first to last ?
I think so ; as we love who works us ill,
And wounds us to the quick, yet loves us still.
Love pardons the unpardonable past :
Love in a dominant embrace holds fast
His frailer self, and saves without her will.

16

Our teachers teach that one and one make two :
Later, Love rules that one and one make one :
Abstruse the problems ! neither need we shun,
But skilfully to each should yield its due.
The narrower total seems to suit the few,
The wider total suits the common run ;
Each obvious in its sphere like moon or sun ;
Both provable by me, and both by you.
Befogged and witless, in a wordy maze
A groping stroll perhaps may do us good ;

If cloyed we are with much we have understood,
If tired of half our dusty world and ways,
If sick of fasting, and if sick of food ;—
And how about these long still-lengthening days?

17

Something this foggy day, a something which
Is neither of this fog nor of to-day,
Has set me dreaming of the winds that play
Past certain cliffs, along one certain beach,
And turn the topmost edge of waves to spray :
Ah pleasant pebbly strand so far away,
So out of reach while quite within my reach,
As out of reach as India or Cathay !
I am sick of where I am and where I am not,
I am sick of foresight and of memory,
I am sick of all I have and all I see,
I am sick of self, and there is nothing new ;
Oh weary impatient patience of my lot !—
Thus with myself : how fares it, Friends, with you?

18

So late in Autumn half the world's asleep,
And half the wakeful world looks pinched and pale ;
For dampness now, not freshness, rides the gale ;
And cold and colourless comes ashore the deep
With tides that bluster or with tides that creep ;
Now veiled uncouthness wears an uncouth veil
Of fog, not sultry haze ; and blight and bale
Have done their worst, and leaves rot on the heap.
So late in Autumn one forgets the Spring,
Forgets the Summer with its opulence,

The callow birds that long have found a wing,
  The swallows that more lately gat them hence :
Will anything like Spring, will anything
  Like Summer, rouse one day the slumbering sense?

19

Here now is Winter. Winter, after all,
  Is not so drear as was my boding dream
  While Autumn gleamed its latest watery gleam
On sapless leafage too inert to fall.
Still leaves and berries clothe my garden wall
  Where ivy thrives on scantiest sunny beam ;
  Still here a bud and there a blossom seem
Hopeful, and robin still is musical.
Leaves, flowers, and fruit, and one delightful song,
  Remain ; these days are short, but now the nights,
  Intense and long, hang out their utmost lights ;
Such starry nights are long, yet not too long ;
Frost nips the weak, while strengthening still the strong
  Against that day when Spring sets all to rights.

20

A hundred thousand birds salute the day :—
  One solitary bird salutes the night :
Its mellow grieving wiles our grief away,
  And tunes our weary watches to delight ;
It seems to sing the thoughts we cannot say,
  To know and sing them, and to set them right ;
Until we feel once more that May is May,
  And hope some buds may bloom without a blight.
This solitary bird outweighs, outvies,
  The hundred thousand merry-making birds ;

Whose innocent warblings yet might make us wise,
Would we but follow when they bid us rise,
  Would we but set their notes of praise to words
And launch our hearts up with them to the skies.

21

A host of things I take on trust: I take
  The nightingales on trust, for few and far
  Between those actual summer moments are
When I have heard what melody they make.
So chanced it once at Como on the Lake:
  But all things, then, waxed musical; each star
  Sang on its course, each breeze sang on its car,
All harmonies sang to senses wide awake.
All things in tune, myself not out of tune,
  Those nightingales were nightingales indeed:
  Yet truly an owl had satisfied my need,
And wrought a rapture underneath that moon,
  Or simple sparrow chirping from a reed;
For June that night glowed like a doubled June.

22

The mountains in their overwhelming might
  Moved me to sadness when I saw them first,
And afterwards they moved me to delight;
  Struck harmonies from silent chords which burst
  Out into song, a song by memory nursed;
For ever unrenewed by touch or sight
Sleeps the keen magic of each day or night,
  In pleasure and in wonder then immersed.
All Switzerland behind us on the ascent,
  All Italy before us, we plunged down
    St. Gothard, garden of forget-me-not:
    Yet why should such a flower choose such a spot?

Could we forget that way which once we went
Though not one flower had bloomed to weave its crown?

23

Beyond the seas we know stretch seas unknown,
Blue and bright-coloured for our dim and green:
Beyond the lands we see stretch lands unseen
With many-tinted tangle overgrown;
And icebound seas there are like seas of stone,
Serenely stormless as death lies serene;
And lifeless tracts of sand, which intervene
Betwixt the lands where living flowers are blown.
This dead and living world befits our case
Who live and die: we live in wearied hope,
We die in hope not dead; we run a race
To-day, and find no present halting-place;
All things we see lie far within our scope,
And still we peer beyond with craving face.

24

The wise do send their hearts before them to
Dear blessed Heaven, despite the veil between;
The foolish nurse their hearts within the screen
Of this familiar world, where all we do
Or have is old, for there is nothing new:
Yet elder far that world we have not seen;
God's Presence antedates what else hath been:
Many the foolish seem, the wise seem few.
Oh foolishest fond folly of a heart
Divided, neither here nor there at rest!
That hankers after Heaven, but clings to earth;
That neither here nor there knows thorough mirth,
Half-choosing, wholly missing, the good part:—
Oh fool among the foolish, in thy quest!

25

When we consider what this life we lead
  Is not, and is: how full of toil and pain,
  How blank of rest and of substantial gain,
Beset by hunger earth can never feed,
And propping half our hearts upon a reed;
  We cease to mourn lost treasures, mourned in vain,
  Lost treasures we are fain and yet not fain
To fetch back for a solace of our need.
For who that feel this burden and this strain,
  This wide vacuity of hope and heart,
Would bring their cherished well-beloved again:
  To bleed with them and wince beneath the smart,
To have with stinted bliss such lavish bane,
  To hold in lieu of all so poor a part?

26

This Life is full of numbness and of balk,
  Of haltingness and baffled shortcoming,
  Of promise unfulfilled, of everything
That is puffed vanity and empty talk:
Its very bud hangs cankered on the stalk,
  Its very song-bird trails a broken wing,
  Its very Spring is not indeed like Spring,
But sighs like Autumn round an aimless walk.
This Life we live is dead for all its breath;
  Death's self it is, set off on pilgrimage,
  Travelling with tottering steps the first short stage:
    The second stage is one mere desert dust
    Where Death sits veiled amid creation's rust:—
Unveil thy face, O Death who art not Death.

27

I have dreamed of Death :—what will it be to die
  Not in a dream, but in the literal truth,
  With all Death's adjuncts ghastly and uncouth,
The pang that is the last and the last sigh ?
Too dulled, it may be, for a last good-bye,
  Too comfortless for any one to soothe,
  A helpless charmless spectacle of ruth
Through long last hours, so long while yet they fly.
So long to those who hopeless in their fear
  Watch the slow breath and look for what they dread :
While I supine with ears that cease to hear,
With eyes that glaze, with heart-pulse running down
  (Alas ! no saint rejoicing on her bed),
May miss the goal at last, may miss a crown.

28

In life our absent friend is far away :
  But death may bring our friend exceeding near,
  Show him familiar faces long so dear
And lead him back in reach of words we say.
He only cannot utter yea or nay
  In any voice accustomed to our ear ;
  He only cannot make his face appear
And turn the sun back on our shadowed day.
The dead may be around us, dear and dead ;
  The unforgotten dearest dead may be
    Watching us with unslumbering eyes and heart,
Brimful of words which cannot yet be said,
    Brimful of knowledge they may not impart,
  Brimful of love for you and love for me.

THE MONTHS

A Pageant

PERSONIFICATIONS

Boys.	*Girls.*
January.	February.
March.	April.
July.	May.
August.	June.
October.	September.
December.	November.

Robin Redbreasts; Lambs and Sheep; Nightingale and Nestlings.

Various Flowers, Fruits, etc.

Scene: A Cottage with its Grounds.

[A room in a large comfortable cottage; a fire burning on the hearth; a table on which the breakfast things have been left standing. January discovered seated by the fire.]

January

Cold the day and cold the drifted snow,
Dim the day until the cold dark night.
[Stirs the fire.
Crackle, sparkle, faggot; embers glow:
Some one may be plodding through the snow
Longing for a light,
For the light that you and I can show.
If no one else should come,
Here Robin Redbreast's welcome to a crumb,
And never troublesome:
Robin, why don't you come and fetch your crumb?

Here's butter for my hunch of bread,
And sugar for your crumb;
Here's room upon the hearthrug,
If you'll only come.

In your scarlet waistcoat,
With your keen bright eye,
Where are you loitering?
Wings were made to fly!

Make haste to breakfast,
Come and fetch your crumb,
For I'm as glad to see you
As you are glad to come.

[Two Robin Redbreasts are seen tapping with their beaks at the lattice, which January opens. The birds flutter in, hop about the floor, and peck up the crumbs and sugar thrown to them. They have scarcely finished their meal when a knock is heard at the door. January hangs a guard in front of the fire, and opens to February, who appears with a bunch of snowdrops in her hand.]

Good-morrow, sister.

FEBRUARY

Brother, joy to you!
I've brought some snowdrops; only just a few,
But quite enough to prove the world awake,
Cheerful and hopeful in the frosty dew
And for the pale sun's sake.

[She hands a few of her snowdrops to January, who retires into the background. While February stands arranging the remaining snowdrops in a glass of water on the window-sill, a soft butting and bleating are heard outside. She opens the door, and sees one foremost lamb, with other sheep and lambs bleating and crowding towards her.]

O you, you little wonder, come—come in,
You wonderful, you woolly soft white lamb:
You panting mother ewe, come too,
And lead that tottering twin
Safe in:
Bring all your bleating kith and kin,
Except the horny ram.

[February opens a second door in the background, and the little flock files through into a warm and sheltered compartment out of sight.]

The lambkin tottering in its walk
With just a fleece to wear;
The snowdrop drooping on its stalk
So slender,—
Snowdrop and lamb, a pretty pair,
Braving the cold for our delight,
Both white,
Both tender.

[A rattling of doors and windows; branches seen without, tossing violently to and fro.]

How the doors rattle, and the branches sway!
Here's brother March comes whirling on his way
With winds that eddy and sing:—

[She turns the handle of the door, which bursts open, and discloses March hastening up, both hands full of violets and anemones.]

Come, show me what you bring;
For I have said my say, fulfilled my day,
And must away.

MARCH

[Stopping short on the threshold.]

I blow an arouse
Through the world's wide house
To quicken the torpid earth:
Grappling I fling
Each feeble thing,
But bring strong life to the birth.
I wrestle and frown,
And topple down;
I wrench, I rend, I uproot;
Yet the violet
Is born where I set
The sole of my flying foot,

[Hands violets and anemones to February, who retires into the background.]

And in my wake
Frail wind-flowers quake,
And the catkins promise fruit.
I drive ocean ashore
With rush and roar,
And he cannot say me nay:
My harpstrings all
Are the forests tall,
Making music when I play.
And as others perforce,
So I on my course
Run and needs must run,
With sap on the mount
And buds past count

And rivers and clouds and sun,
With seasons and breath
And time and death
And all that has yet begun.

[Before March has done speaking, a voice is heard approaching accompanied by a twittering of birds. April comes along singing, and stands outside and out of sight to finish her song.]

APRIL

[Outside.]

Pretty little three
Sparrows in a tree,
Light upon the wing;
Though you cannot sing
You can chirp of Spring:
Chirp of Spring to me,
Sparrows, from your tree.

Never mind the showers,
Chirp about the flowers
While you build a nest:
Straws from east and west,
Feathers from your breast,
Make the snuggest bowers
In a world of flowers.

You must dart away
From the chosen spray,
You intrusive third
Extra little bird;
Join the unwedded herd!
These have done with play,
And must work to-day.

[Appearing at the open door.]

Good-morrow and good-bye: if others fly,
Of all the flying months you're the most flying.

MARCH

You're hope and sweetness, April.

APRIL

Birth means dying,
As wings and wind mean flying;
So you and I and all things fly or die;
And sometimes I sit sighing to think of dying.
But meanwhile I've a rainbow in my showers,
And a lapful of flowers,
And these dear nestlings aged three hours;
And here's their mother sitting;
Their father's merely flitting
To find their breakfast somewhere in my bowers.

[As she speaks April shows March her apron full of flowers and nest full of birds. March wanders away into the grounds. April, without entering the cottage, hangs over the hungry nestlings watching them.]

What beaks you have, you funny things,
What voices shrill and weak!
Who'd think that anything that sings
Could sing through such a beak?
Yet you'll be nightingales one day,
And charm the country side,
When I'm away and far away
And May is queen and bride.

[May arrives unperceived by April, and gives her a kiss. April starts and looks round.]

Ah May, good-morrow, May, and so good-bye.

MAY

That's just your way, sweet April, smile and sigh:
Your sorrow's half in fun,
Begun and done
And turned to joy while twenty seconds run.
I've gathered flowers all as I came along,
At every step a flower
Fed by your last bright shower,—

[She divides an armful of all sorts of flowers with April, who strolls away through the garden.]

And gathering flowers I listened to the song
Of every bird in bower.

The world and I are far too full of bliss
To think or plan or toil or care;
The sun is waxing strong,
The days are waxing long,
And all that is
Is fair.

Here are my buds of lily and of rose,
And here's my namesake blossom May;
And from a watery spot
See here forget-me-not,
With all that blows
To-day.

Hark to my linnets from the hedges green,
Blackbird and lark and thrush and dove,
And every nightingale
And cuckoo tells its tale,
And all they mean
Is love.

[June appears at the further end of the garden, coming slowly towards May, who, seeing her, exclaims]

Surely you're come too early, sister June.

JUNE

Indeed I feel as if I came too soon
To round your young May moon
And set the world a-gasping at my noon.
Yet come I must. So here are strawberries,
Sun-flushed and sweet, as many as you please;
And here are full-blown roses by the score,
More roses, and yet more.

[May, eating strawberries, withdraws among the flower beds.]

The sun does all my long day's work for me,
Raises and ripens everything;
I need but sit beneath a leafy tree
And watch and sing.

[Seats herself in the shadow of a laburnum.]

Or if I'm lulled by note of bird and bee,
Or lulled by noontide's silence deep,
I need but nestle down beneath my tree
And drop asleep.

[June falls asleep; and is not awakened by the voice of July, who behind the scenes is heard half singing, half calling.]

JULY

[Behind the scenes.]

Blue flags, yellow flags, flags all freckled,
Which will you take? yellow, blue, speckled!
Take which you will, speckled, blue, yellow,
Each in its way has not a fellow.

[Enter July, a basket of many-coloured irises slung upon his shoulders, a bunch of ripe grass in one hand, and a plate piled full of peaches balanced upon the other. He steals up to June, and tickles her with the grass. She wakes.]

JUNE

What, here already?

JULY

Nay, my tryst is kept;
The longest day slipped by you while you slept.
I've brought you one curved pyramid of bloom,

[Hands her the plate.]

Not flowers but peaches, gathered where the bees,
As downy, bask and boom
In sunshine and in gloom of trees.
But get you in, a storm is at my heels;
The whirlwind whistles and wheels,
Lightning flashes and thunder peals,
Flying and following hard upon my heels.

[June takes shelter in a thickly-woven arbour.]

The roar of a storm sweeps up
From the east to the lurid west,
The darkening sky, like a cup,
Is filled with rain to the brink;
The sky is purple and fire,
Blackness and noise and unrest;
The earth, parched with desire,
Opens her mouth to drink.

Send forth thy thunder and fire.
Turn over thy brimming cup,
O sky, appease the desire
Of earth in her parched unrest;

Pour out drink to her thirst,
Her famishing life lift up ;
Make thyself fair as at first,
With a rainbow for thy crest.

Have done with thunder and fire,
O sky with the rainbow crest ;
O earth, have done with desire,
Drink, and drink deep, and rest.

[Enter August, carrying a sheaf made up of different kinds of grain.]

Hail, brother August, flushed and warm
And scatheless from my storm.
Your hands are full of corn, I see,
As full as hands can be :
And earth and air both smell as sweet as balm
In their recovered calm,
And that they owe to me.

[July retires into a shrubbery.]

AUGUST

Wheat sways heavy, oats are airy,
Barley bows a graceful head,
Short and small shoots up canary,
Each of these is some one's bread ;
Bread for man or bread for beast,
Or at very least
A bird's savoury feast.

Men are brethren of each other,
One in flesh and one in food ;
And a sort of foster-brother
Is the litter or the brood

Of that folk in fur or feather
Who with men together,
Breast the wind and weather.

[August descries September toiling across the lawn.]

My harvest home is ended; and I spy
September drawing nigh
With the first thought of Autumn in her eye,
And the first sigh
Of Autumn wind among her locks that fly.

[September arrives, carrying upon her head a basket heaped high with fruit.]

SEPTEMBER

Unload me, brother. I have brought a few
Plums and these pears for you,
A dozen kinds of apples, one or two
Melons, some figs all bursting through
Their skins, and pearled with dew
These damsons violet-blue.

[While September is speaking, August lifts the basket to the ground, selects various fruits, and withdraws slowly along the gravel walk, eating a pear as he goes.]

My song is half a sigh
Because my green leaves die;
Sweet are my fruits, but all my leaves are dying;
And well may Autumn sigh,
And well may I
Who watch the sere leaves flying.

My leaves that fade and fall,
I note you one and all;
I call you, and the Autumn wind is calling,

Lamenting for your fall,
And for the pall
You spread on earth in falling.

And here's a song of flowers to suit such hours :
A song of the last lilies, the last flowers,
Amid my withering bowers.

In the sunny garden bed
Lilies look so pale,
Lilies droop the head
In the shady grassy vale ;
If all alike they pine
In shade and in shine,
If everywhere they grieve,
Where will lilies live ?

[October enters briskly, some leafy twigs bearing different sorts of nuts in one hand, and a long ripe hop-bine trailing after him from the other. A dahlia is stuck in his buttonhole.]

October

Nay, cheer up sister. Life is not quite over,
Even if the year has done with corn and clover,
With flowers and leaves ; besides, in fact it's true,
Some leaves remain and some flowers too
For me and you.
Now see my crops :

[Offering his produce to September.]

I've brought you nuts and hops ;
And when the leaf drops, why, the walnut drops.

[October wreathes the hop-bine about September's neck, and gives her the nut twigs. They enter the cottage together, but without shutting the door. She steps into the background : he advances to the hearth, removes the guard, stirs up the smouldering fire, and arranges several chestnuts ready to roast.]

Crack your first nut and light your first fire,
Roast your first chestnut crisp on the bar;
Make the logs sparkle, stir the blaze higher,
Logs are cheery as sun or as star,
Logs we can find wherever we are.

Spring one soft day will open the leaves,
Spring one bright day will lure back the flowers;
Never fancy my whistling wind grieves,
Never fancy I've tears in my showers:
Dance, nights and days! and dance on, my hours!

[Sees November approaching.]

Here comes my youngest sister, looking dim
And grim,
With dismal ways.
What cheer, November?

NOVEMBER

[Entering and shutting the door.]

Nought have I to bring,
Tramping a-chill and shivering,
Except these pine-cones for a blaze,—
Except a fog which follows,
And stuffs up all the hollows,—
Except a hoar frost here and there,—
Except some shooting stars
Which dart their luminous cars
Trackless and noiseless through the keen night air.

[October, shrugging his shoulders, withdraws into the background, while November throws her pine-cones on the fire, and sits down listlessly.]

The earth lies fast asleep, grown tired
Of all that's high or deep;
There's nought desired and nought required
Save a sleep.

I rock the cradle of the earth,
I lull her with a sigh;
And know that she will wake to mirth
By and by.

[Through the window December is seen running and leaping in the direction of the door. He knocks.]

Ah, here's my youngest brother come at last:

[Calls out without rising.]

Come in, December.

[He opens the door and enters, loaded with evergreens in berry, etc.]

Come, and shut the door,
For now it's snowing fast;
It snows, and will snow more and more;
Don't let it drift in on the floor.
But you, you're all aglow; how can you be
Rosy and warm and smiling in the cold?

DECEMBER

Nay, no closed doors for me,
But open doors and open hearts and glee
To welcome young and old.

Dimmest and brightest month am I;
My short days end, my lengthening days begin;
What matters more or less sun in the sky,
When all is sun within?

[He begins making a wreath as he sings.]

Ivy and privet dark as night,
I weave with hips and haws a cheerful show,
And holly for a beauty and delight,
And milky mistletoe.

While high above them all I set
Yew twigs and Christmas roses pure and pale;
Then Spring her snowdrop and her violet
May keep, so sweet and frail;

May keep each merry singing bird,
Of all her happy birds that singing build:
For I've a carol which some shepherds heard
Once in a wintry field.

While December concludes his song all the other Months troop in from the garden, or advance out of the background. The Twelve join hands in a circle, and begin dancing round to a stately measure as the Curtain falls.]

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THE END

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